



*All
for a Crown*
ALEXANDRE DUMAS



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“What is this? What creation of deviltry is this?”

(See page 161)

ALL FOR A CROWN;

OR, THE

Only Love of King Henry the Eighth

(CATHERINE HOWARD)

BY

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

AUTHOR OF

"D'Artagnan the Kingmaker," "The King's Gallant," "The Regal Box," "Monte Cristo," Etc.

TRANSLATED BY

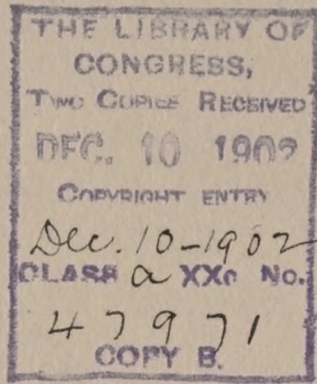
HENRY L. WILLIAMS

Based on Dumas' Catherine Howard.



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All for a Crown

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PREFACE.

Some wonder, naturally, will spring up during the reading of this work by Alexandre Dumas. For, while the scene is laid in England, and the plot and characters are thoroughly English, it is remarkable that it was devised and written by a Frenchman.

A genius is "of all countries and no time." It may only be that, with the peculiar gift of talent to absorb identifiable features of a period, a country or a personage, the author embodied himself with his scene as an actor with the part which he loves.

"Catherine Howard" was evolved in Dumas' "studying" days, when he was widening his scope by learning English. To add to his relish in exploring this ground, celebrated English actors came to Paris and displayed Shakespeare in his native effulgence to the marveling Parisians. At once Dumas recognized the incontestable supremacy of this bard over all; he hastened to be versed in him, translating "Hamlet," which is a standard version on the French stage. As for "King Henry VIII.," though there is only a line borrowed in this novel, the whole is impregnated with the Shakespearean spirit. Yet, nowhere in Shakespeare is to be found Catherine Howard. Though English as a daisy, there is none of the tortured elegance of the same "Margueritized." She is Dumas' own.

He apologizes for the fiction as ultra-romantic, because he fantastically embroidered on the set ground. He chooses to make "Bluff King Hal" the front figure, and not the "Terrible Tudor," the wrestler with Francis, the

knight who would have fought hand-to-hand Philip of Spain or Charles of Germany; the Defender who became the Defyer of Rome—one likes all the better the genial, blunt, rough-jesting, royal Falstaff, who thought, in his declining years, of “a lass and a glass.”

Before he was thirty, Dumas could include this offspring among his ten or twelve popular successes. He feared, though, that his sensitiveness had outstripped his good sense. But, according to his own plea, one must not exact ripe fruit from the garden in spring, or that the cathedral to be roofed in the architect’s span; an author may gain his end with activity of resources without his wings being full-fledged.

Impressed generally by English dramatic art, Dumas was individually imposed upon by that colossus, the Eighth Henry. Singular amalgam of a great business man, fond of outdoor sports, but of the dance, too, a warrior who would shut himself up in the study to compose theological tracts—browbeating yet courtly, magnificent and yet greedy, subtle among statesmen and yet letting pert minxes like “Nan” Bullen and wary old widows like Catherine Parr “pull the pelt over his eyes.”

Dumas likes this portly, unctious *Mercutio*, and saw, apart from tradition, new and entertaining phases in him. Shakespeare was not so free, knowing that the original’s daughter would review the likeness.

In history, Catherine Howard trips by as a captivating lady’s maid, dressed, tutored and danced by a courtier clique. Here we see a girl so fair and bright that she stood above the common herd as naturally as one choice flower overtops the garden. When the revelation comes that an obscure witch foretold that she would stand on the throne—as many a pretty girl has been told by as many a cunning old witch—she readily accepts it. She has merely to compare with her predecessors to find her-

self more winsome, and she determines to win. Catherine aims at the crown. Atalanta lost her race because she stopped to pick up the shining lures—Catherine races on over hearts, gratitude, honor, renown, purses. A comet does not detain her—she will grasp the Crown of England! An earl is a drag—it is “Cæsar or nothing!” with her.

But this makes a defined character that we can understand, and we must admire the consistency and persistency.

It is because her course finishes high and her advance to it is unflagging that the reader has to keep step with her and rejoices at the victory, though her means and her use of them are other things.

Dumas gives full measure, and the drop-over is the moral, which the beauty who runs such a race cannot elude. Under the Tudors there was no gap between the floor of throne and scaffold. As the gilded usher showed the favorite into the palace, so the ensanguined headsman showed the disgraced queen into the dungeon.

But if Vanity and Ambition are chastised, so is the inhuman tyrant. He who thought all frailty “woman-like” suffers by falling under the despotic sway of a too infatuating love. The injured rival’s dagger spared him, but only that he might undergo “the complaint called jealousy, to which the gout is a gentle stroking.”

The trio of Beauty, Love and Desire is eternal; but there is novelty in its encompassing figures. It stirs one to see the chivalric young Sussex beard the Lion of England and gallant a queen in distress; to study those “men of iron,” the sturdy Scots whom the palace could not daunt, the lovelorn Princess Margaret, and the credulous seeker of immortality who could read all fates—but his own!

In short, though you may criticise the tribute, being

by his own son—as if one genius could not speak truth of another—Alexandre Dumas is “the only Frenchman coming near to Shakespeare, by his inventiveness, power and variety; having genius without arrogance, and profusion without effort, and a prodigious fancy reaching the four cardinal points of art: Tragedy, Comedy, Tales of Love and Historical Romances.”

H. L. W.

ALL FOR A CROWN.

CHAPTER I.

THE LONGING FOR LIFE AND THE LONGING FOR LOVE.

The reign of King Edward the Eighth of England had some five or six years yet to run.

His country presented much of the aspect of one where an earthquake has made people still timorous about the possibility of any structure not crumbling from the shaking received. There were no enterprises undertaken without strong possibility of immediate result. The old shook their heads ominously at any project, and the young had their hands stayed on the tiller, the plough and the ax.

The Thames upper-waters showed their apathy and disinclination to move out of the trodden ways excepting for daily bread. The stream was shallow from two years' drouth and the back-waters and side-flows were abandoned. Wild birds, animals and vermin alone profited; never were the glades and still waters so full of live creatures, to whom the poacher was unknown.

Castles were being built out of the pulled-down abbeys and manor houses for a nobility of the purse; graziers, merchants and wool-combers who could lend the royal

treasury bullion were beginning to erect "houses" in brick and stone as on parchment.

One of the two men who appeared on this scene might fall under the ban comprising practicers of the black art. But the other, certainly, was above the threats of the laws against the poor and vicious.

These two, in this first week of June, had come from London in the regular barge plying between the Bridge and Mortlake. Thence they had taken the carriers' van to Richmond, where they hired a boat again. They paid like princes, or, at least, the young man did, as the purse-bearer, but they seemed not to wish to attract attention.

On landing at Hampton "the Happy" they struck off upon the grass-grown riverside boldly, as if they cared not how far they might go astray, and without the slightest fear of being waylaid by the lurkers, who feared less a man with a purse than the constable, with his whip, halter and stocks to back him.

The elder of the pair was aged; yet he carried himself like one buoyed up by some feeling rendering years no burden. It is true he held a pilgrim's staff, but it was as little a leaning-pole as a weapon. He did not seem to be otherwise armed, but, no doubt, under his flowing and full gown, furred as became a rich citizen or a professional gentleman, he might have the long knife used to carve at meals, or even that short sword called a "hunting companion."

His shoes were easy, cut and puffed as if, like his royal master—for he was of the household of King Henry—he suffered from the gout on account of standing too much.

He had a comfortable wool cap, slouched over one ear and eye, and adjusted as the sun slanted. On his face, not overmuch wrinkled, were scars and flecks, as if caused by burns; perhaps, sparks out of the furnace, or splashes of acid left these tokens of meddling with fire and cabalistic elements.

If he slouched his cap to shield his eyes, it was pure habit. They needed no other screen than the shaggy, white brows and the depth of the hollows in which they sank, but they blazed like a fire in a cave. His age considered, their luster was remarkable. This ardency was that of a lamp constantly nourished. What could the white-poll be sustained by? One beyond loving man, maid, or lucre, perhaps, he seemed no miser; he could not care for revenge, for he had an amiable and winning air, though solemn. It was hope, but for what?

His companion had not a third of his age; he could not be thirty. He was extremely fair, and pointed in many ways back to an ancestry surpassing the Norman line; for, though these conquerors of Saxon England were from the North, they had, by inter-marriage, obtained coloring in complexion and hair of the French from the South. His golden hair, a little lank and dull, rolled from under a smart velvet cap, but it covered with its elegance the steel lining betrayed by a point coming down over the forehead to guard the nose; foppish gallants used this precaution, not to have that chief feature shorn off by the cutting sword, much in vogue, in the hands of highway rovers. His short Spanish cloak, of brocade, reversed not to reveal some badge or emblazonment denoting at-

tachment to some known house, was so sumptuous as to come within the law forbidding such fantastic shape. This let his arms, sinewy rather than strong, have full play. In his belt, on opposite sides, so as to balance each other, was a hunting-sword and a pistol of exquisite workmanship, so that it could readily be managed with one hand; it had a match wound on a wheel so that the fired end could be presented at need to the powder-pan. Its powder-horn, of so-called unicorn, chiseled with art, balanced a dainty bag, containing bullets and the instruments for keeping the little weapon in order. But, as if he feared that, alone, he required ample defense as a precious man to his master or himself, at his back, reaching to his heels, where his half-boots bore marks of spur-straps, hung from a stout shoulder-strap one of those formidable double-handed, long swords going out of use.

He scanned the brake, the fen, the mead, and the mirror-like pools and running water as if he expected dryad, nymph, or naiad to peer out at him and cry:

“At last you have found her!”

The fact is, Ethelwolf, Earl of Dereham, had his hands full of fortune’s choicest boons, but he did not know that he yearned for some one to share them. He loved without a responder. His fate hung in the void.

A strange pair, therefore, age and youth, hopeful and wistful—alike only in chafing at a wish unfulfilled.

“What do I spy in the fading light and through the haze in that vista of arch-elms?” asked the young man, shading his eyes. “It is like a wild animal strange to our land!”

"It is just a stone lion—the Percy lion—on a house of the Northumberlands."

"I see that now. I guess where we are. But yonder, along the river, a huge bulk—like an elephant from the East?"

"A stranded barge. We shall see it nearer presently. It is my mark."

The beauty of the scene made the younger man halt.

There is a period when the slanting sunbeams give the leaves and the sward an odd and charming green tint. The underside reflects and alters the tone of the whole blade or petal.

"Hold, Fleming," said Lord Dereham. "Are we never to be at rest? That barge, as you call a mere mound of blackness, is rather off than by our direct line. The river winds here in its shallowness like a wounded snake. It darkens so quick! I fear me that I shall wade over my half-boots or step into a quagmire! The path is but a gray ribbon on dark green velvet!"

"If you wish to rest, my lord, as well here as yonder. Anywhere will come midnight."

"Oh, I am far from tired. Only, it is mean and irksome for one of the fifteen earls of England to be buried alive and in a quicksand!"

"Have no fear! I know the road. Besides, your long sword, like my staff, laid across the pit would enable one to recover firm land. But I have read your futurity, lord! You are not to perish in that ignominious grave of nature's formation."

"Let us go on to the destination!" He resumed the

pace, keeping in with his guide. "I can discern nothing now. I should not wonder if I were on estate of mine own, but it might be the Stygian pool. Only, what shall we do to kill time here or there, awaiting the unhallowed hour when the other creatures may appear?"

"Keep on! There we will rest!"

"If only one might bite or sup!" grumbled the young man, evidently very animal after the long jaunt.

The dark made the old leader, in his flowing robe, little noticeable; Ethelwolf was tempted to seize the hem, not to lose touch. He was a son of the castle, the tilt-yard, the lighted gallery, the throne-room itself, and this loneliness weighed on him. He had hunted, strayed, fought, gamed, but always in goodly company.

Not superstitious more than his compeers, yet this association with a newcomer of fame began to taunt him, in connection with the increasing gloom. He could too easily fancy the goblins, will-o'-the-wisps and fairies with which these meadows and copses were peopled by the common folk.

Now and then the old alchemist glanced over his shoulder, to make sure that his follower was not halting—he knew that he would not give up the errand.

The low hump, as of a mastodon, suddenly loomed up fairly. After a turn or two, almost as if they were crossing at the liberal bend, they arrived. A splendid lawn, as if made by man, opened before them, intersected by the river, tolerably straight, but widening, so that it remained shallow. On the bank rose, lumberlike, a barge, half of its side completely blocking the path. In fact, the few

wayfarers, unable to surmount such an obstacle, had traced a half-circle to avoid it.

This hulk had settled down in the mud by its ponderosity. The inclination of the deck remained, but the face was to the north, and not to them. It had been richly painted and gilded, but time had beaten off the ornaments, so that the surface was flat, and worn away the sheen and the coloring. Slime had mounted, with its fine green deposit from the ooze, and dyed the side. Woodbine had climbed up to the gunnel and mingled its white threads of the dead growth with its yellow, new shoots. Wet leaves had been blown against it, and stuck and dried. In the windows, sprigs had lodged; there was a swallow's nest in one. This mass of neglect gave a saddening impression, and the young man felt that sinking of the heart which the sensitive feel before a wreck.

The guide walked away from the bank, to the relief of his follower, who feared being mired. A broken spar or two, on which sailcloth had been heaped to rot, were covered with lichen and leaves. He motioned his companion to be seated, and leaned on his staff, his back to the deserted bark.

"What you did was right as for diet. Now, did you take heed to enter your room with the left foot first, but always to leave it the right foot foremost? Every day, mentally, without moving your lips, did you say the prayer in cabalistic language which I taught you?"

To each query the man nodded, whether seen or not, his eyes fixed on the barge, which to him seemed a kind of

mausoleum, it so hinted of departed pride, show and "bravery."

"Did you bathe in that filtered water in which was dissolved the peculiar powder prepared by me? Did you dry yourself with the stone-flax towels I supplied, cleansed (mark you!) by being laid on the smokeless embers of a hollywood fire?"

"I have strictly done all that, Father the Fleming! The diet appeased my turbulent feelings. I should have been impatient but for that, I do not doubt. It is quite tranquilly, though my longing is strong, not to a false and fleeting delight—such as I have frequently felt—but to any of the Last Four Things of this world!"

"They may come in this hour, one when they cost an eternity's useless repining!"

"Tush! I dread not the death, which we all must meet; the purgatory, which few are so good as not to have to pass through, even if shortly; purgatory—what it is to one who has passed in the court where the vacillating Henry sent a martyr to the pyre on the same day for one creed, and another, as well, for being of no creed! But, as for the best of the four things—Paradise! I wish to taste a little of that here; but I am not selfish—like Adam, it will have no gusto unless woman opens the pearly gates!"

"My lord," replied the wizard, "that is to be decided this night. You will have but to ask your will of the spirit we raise! It may be able—no, of that I have no doubt—it may be willing to raise for you the ideal of your

worship—or the old lures—Helen the Incomparably Fair, Cleopatra, Lais, Thais——”

“A truce! Do not let us go so far as them! A fair Englishwoman for a true Englishman! The one fore-ordained for Dereham is sure to be such, if your spirits have supernal sense! You can divine one’s inmost wishes—surely, they are not lower than their master! No, no, I do not believe they will simply present to me out of the bushes a Madge Wildfire, out of the fen a Robine Goodfellow, out of the woods a Titania! No, out of that hulk rather let us see a boatman’s daughter! There are some beauteous wenches on the riverside!”

The old man shook his head, and his beard waved; he might be indignant that his pupil and a noble should have such earthly appetites when he talked of supernatural idols.

“My lord,” said he, in a grave tone, as if the atmosphere oppressed him and this levity pained, “you see there a memorial of the brevity of human love and beauty! That galley was constructed on the reach over there, for the entertainment of Queen Ann Bullen. Many hundreds of hedgers and ditchers lost their lives in the noxious reeks of the waterway, which they dredged out that this galeass might flounder for a short run. I think I can see the young coquette on that day when she was displayed to the court as the royal choice! She was clad in white satin, embroidered with gold and blue silk. She had the semblance of a crown on her head, which glittered in the unclouded sun. She sat on that deck there, polished like ivory for her dainty feet in fur slippers. She had twenty

ladies around her, her successor among them! You could not see the water for the boats full of courtiers and their servants, decked in their liveliest and costliest. They flocked around the barge. On the banks, where we are, crowds of huntsmen, verderers, bow-bearers, 'regarders,' woodwards, and such, dressed alike in green and scarlet, and with the rose in their caps, waited the signal to go through a mock hunt, for which, during a month before, deer and rabbits and a hundred red squirrels from Norway, were let loose and fed, to accustom them to the locality! There were six *hobbelars*, horsemen of the fleetest, constantly at her beck for her letters to be carried and purchases made, and their bridles and spurs jingled like music as their steeds impatiently resented the curb!

"The king was a little delayed, for he was no longer young, and tarried a trifle over the dressing table! And I marked how her little foot beat with impatience! Ah, my lord, she was beating at death's door with a near foot!"

"I suppose this memory of yours is to put me in the fit mood for your deviltries, eh?" grumbled Dereham, whom the fast, as well as this delay in the damp, had irritated.

"They had a repast on that deck, the king beside her; and at night she came to the edge there, sat on a cushioned chair, he laughingly holding it—since it slipped—and the whole woods flared with pitchpots and torches! There was a flambeaux dance! There was music! All was so radiant and gay!

"Next morning I strolled through the scene; gypsies and other vermin were picking up the crumbs and roasting the

fragments of a mangled deer, at which she had let fly an arrow—though it was a concealed archer in the hazel over there who really brought it low—the meat she disdained batted a mongrel—but I vow she would have given up that day of queenly splendor to have been able to enjoy such a carrion meal! She was put to death, you know, my lord——”

“I was at Courtenay College then! I have seen only the Queen Jane Seymour!” answered Dereham, sulkily, and yawning.

The old man, with his cat’s eyes, spied something half overgrown with ivy; he stepped over to it and picked it up; it looked, in the dusk, like an iron skull. It was a basket of metal in which tallow and tow had burned.

“Do you see, my lord—a cresset! It figured in that illumination to the queen of a day! Now it is but a few crossing bars of old iron—so fiery a meteor then; and she, star of that day, a bagful of moldering bones, with the head out of place!”

“None of this! I am ready to see raw heads and rattling bones!” said the young noble, only half jestingly. “Go on with your preparations, for I doubt not that you require some paraphernalia for your conjurations!”

Thus reproved, the old man drew off a little to a level place. He gazed long and steadily at the sky, where half its expanse was too veiled for certain stars to be descried. But, ascertaining the true east as well as the north, he stuck twigs in to mark the lines intersecting, and proceeded with his making ready.

The earl looked at the barge; since he had heard the

story of its being so out of place in the shallow waters, it had a redeeming light through fancy. Once again he could imagine it in its glory, with that frail, evanescent beauty at the prow, and at her back the burly form of the cruel tyrant.

“Ah, me! He broke the Papal power at the neck as deftly as those gentle charmers!” sighed Dereham.

A church bell struck for the hour. The sounds reverberated through the woods and faded over the lea, smothered by the mist.

“Ten o’clock, by Chertsey Old Church!” remarked the magician.

With two long elder rods, peeled so as to show white, added to his staff, he made a kind of tripod.

“Only ten! It will be a long two hours!” gaped the novice.

“Patience! You shall feast after the fast!”

Dereham glanced around, though the barge had its attraction, unaccountable to say. His blue eyes, though strong as such are, failed to perceive many stars streamed over by the quick-sailing clouds. Overhead, the wind whistled, without stirring even the highest trees in their passage. But the trees stirred in another way, as if invisible but potent arms embraced them at the root and shook them steadily. In the copses, voices seemed to say: “Hush! Hush!”

Peewits flitted, as if startled out of their nooks. A kestrel, swimming above in the weird light under one layer of cloud, pursued prey, as if in the day.

“A feast?” sneered the young man, bitterly. “Unless

we tickle a trout under the bank, or find an eelpot, or a descendant of the squirrels turned loose to amuse the Bullen girl pops into my grasp, I see no such prospect. It is the heart of Arabia—Arabia Felix, if you like, but an inn not within a trumpet call.”

The sage hung the cresset, which he had found, under the tripod by a chain of metal taken from around his waist.

“So, ho! Are we going to cook something?” said the earl, trying to amuse himself, for he knew that the cooking was to be hell-broth; “are we to have snail soup?”

The sage deigned to smile. Out of a large satchel suspended at his side he took a metal box, and from within that, two round cakes of small size, emitting, in the darkness, a glow as of deadwood.

“One for each,” explained he; “all that can be allowed you now. But it is concentrated. An ancient commander among the Chaldeans marched an army three hundred miles on these rations. It is manna and crushed locusts!”

Dereham made a wry face, not noticed in the gloom, as he put it to his lips. But the odor and taste were grateful. He waited, cautiously, to see that his counselor swallowed the companion lozenge without jugglery, and then munched and gulped down his “feast.”

Its light was unattended by heat; but it gave a peppery sensation, and he said, gloomily and suspiciously:

“I have no heir but the king, whose liege and wise-worker you are, my Fleming! But, as Hal knoweth that he could lop off my head at any time, though as unde-

servedly, perhaps, as Ann Bullen's, I risk your being ordered to make away with me with this odd pellet!"

"A drug? Fatal? To you, my lord, best patron I have next to his grace!" reproached the Fleming. "Did you not see me eat the like?"

"Was there not a king who fed on poison, so as to be proof? It's a fool rat who has not two outlets to his hole—a fool magician who prepares a bane without its counterbane!"

By this time the balsamic pill had dissolved. Lord Dereham felt a warmth, accompanied with mental enlivenment. He became oblivious to the damp and the murkiness; the vision of the short-lived queen, on her gilded barge, returned; only, the whole scene became like that of her zenith.

He began to see things surrounded by gold and violet glories; the old sage appeared floating over the ground, and edged with brightness. He was puzzled over what it meant; the tracing of a circle around the tripod with his finger spread as if it could leave a mark on the turf. It looked as if this pointing caused the grass to be blasted, so that a ring was evident, like those called "the fairies' dance."

"What are you doing, you fiends' director?" cried out Dereham, puzzled, feeling as if the circle was continued in his brain in endless convolutions. "Seeking gout-mushrooms for the king?"

"I am tracing the magic inclosures in which we must stand not to be the prey of those we ought to defy and command."

The other stood up; he was erect enough, but swayed a little; the narcotic in the pill made him believe this slight unsteadiness was a great one—that he was spinning around.

“You are hollowing out a death pit! Here, am I to be carried off by your imps? What have you poisoned me with? Woa! It is getting hot enough to fuse that church bell which is ever humming in my ears! I shall wrench away that stick from the two serpents twining about it and thwack you for your part in this plot against a Christian! How the very earth totters! But I—I stand firm! Yet is this you, or a score of Flemings? By the grace of St. George, are you a hundred, or have I a hundred eyes?”

He staggered toward the magician, who, with a pitying smile, steadied him within the ring, where he detained him. This ring must have been vaguely remarked by him, for he began to dance the stately step of the period at court, snapping his fingers, as if possessing castanets, and humming between his closed lips.

The necromancer let him go, watched that he would not fall, and, with dried rushes and twigs, made heaps of firewood around them all, shaping the lines as a triangle, but at the same time inclosing the circle.

Dereham smiled to the four quarters, saluted a partner, and sang, in his young, mellow voice:

“Strong, strong is wine!

Stronger the king!

Truth is divine;

But love—love is the stronger, strongest thing!”

"The old man glanced at him, stooping, making the heaps regular. He had made nine of them.

"Never before has he tasted the *bhang!*" muttered he. "He experiences the intoxication, I the goodness from it. But the stupor will come, in which he will see what I suggest!"

Indeed, the young noble's excitement suddenly collapsed; he leaned against the staff and chuckled to himself, trying to count the stars which he imagined above, for the clouds had blotted them all out, on his fingers, twitching as with commencing tetanus. He drew himself up like a sovereign, and haughtily said:

"Draw near with the trophies! You have battled long and successfully—I knight you all, Sir Newt, Sir Toad, Sir—all that were base are exalted, all that were high are ennobled as my peers!"

The Fleming rose, laughing, in a low tone, and made a profound bow to the imaginary monarch, saying:

"May it please your dread majesty to loan me your falchion? I would carry out your sentence to lop off the traitor's limbs!"

Without helping him, but also without resisting him, the dazed man allowed the other to unhang the long sword. With this, he went over into the woods, a blasted clump, where he used the blade to hack off very dry boughs. To the confused vision of the victim of the East Indian weed, he was hewing giants and dislimbing them. He clapped his hands and waved them over his head. He had thrown off his cap, and the steel inside showed within the cloth as it rolled.

“Ha! It is the queen’s head!” said he, lowering his voice. “Poor day’s sport! It was not lusty enough to sustain the crowd, ah! The crown of England is a weighty woe! A heavy ornament to the wretch who would fain seize that dangerous gaud!”

The Fleming returned, and added the wood to the heaps.

More than one chapel bell was heard to the east. The wind came through the treetops now, sounding as on harp strings.

The fog, torn from its flimsy moorings, began to move and mass up. These bodies had uncouth shapes to the young man, still impaired in clearness of sense.

“Advance, banners!” shouted the earl, waving his hand, as the magician returned with the second load. “Hurry and hurry, for Captain Christmas is bringing up the rear battle with the creams, the cakes, and the custards! Let him creep into the brush, where we will leap out and fall upon him!”

“Stand where you are, my lord, on peril of your soul!”

“I, the king, will lend a hand to replenish the larder! I am famished, by holy will, for dabbling in witchery. I am hungered! I could sink my majesty and beg scraps of a trencher-scraper!”

“He has so fasted that he will see my visions!” said the magician. “This is as planned.”

Under his gown he had, slung to his girdle, one of those bottles of fine clay, bound with wicker. He brought it forth, and pleasantly repelled the other’s eager hands.

"No, no! To drink is to take death!" said he, severely. "It is not wine; it is *terebenthinum*!"

"Drink, drink! I will give of my blood, drop for drop, for drink!" whimpered Dereham.

"Wait and see what you would have fought me for!"

He sprinkled his piles of firing with this essence. A smell of tar pervaded the immediate air, and was rapidly blown away.

"Ah!" said the youth, inhaling, rapturously. "Me-thinks this is the nectar of the gods, transported to us on the breath of Æolus!"

Fleming drained the spirits on the last pile.

The smell seemed to calm the other; he closed his eyes, after a vain effort to keep them open, grasped the staff, with tightening grip, and dozed, rocking.

He was not conscious of the hand at his girdle, which removed his pistol, with infinite precaution. He was used to firearms, for he put it in state to explode a charge.

In the northeast, a sheet of lightning broke and suffused the inky curtain; it was one of those discharges which surround the true thunderstroke, not visible here.

As if he had caught the fire, the old man, exploding the powder in the pan, transferred the flame to the fire-heap saturated with the pine essence. Letting this burn up, which it did with the perseverance of fire in high wind but combating with the damp in air-dried wood, he suddenly darted to where something white caught this flicker.

An animal of some size, horse or cow, had been brought down the stream; the barge had embayed it, and it had been reduced by eels and other natural scavengers to a

skeleton; washed clean here and there, some of the bleached bones shone in this fitful fire.

The Fleming reached it, and, without any of the compunction most persons showed for handling such relics, picked out the great long skull, with a few grinning teeth and two ribs. With these, he returned to the fire; he spread the flame from one heap to another, till all were burning. Then, the young man beginning to awake, he crossed the bones under the tripod and set the skull in the hollow itself.

Dereham opened his eyes, after the pause of insensibility of which he did not know the duration, and perceived the ghastly objects in the fiery inclosure.

“Cling to me, boy, and closely—the trial hour is come!”

The martial spirit of the peer returned. The sight of the pistol made him think of resisting human foes.

“My pistol!” said he. “My long sword! Let us contend with them!”

There was rushing of the gale, sounding like an advance of horse and foot.

The fires burned low, and, uniting, formed almost an unbroken circumvallation. The smoke was intensely black, thick, and aromatic, and kept down the flame.

The earl compressed his forehead with his hands; his eyes glared wildly, as he let them fall. He looked straight before him to weather quarter.

The storm was raging in the distance.

“It is Arthur’s chase!” said he, in a respectful tone, hanging on to the old man’s arm. “There is a king at the

head, who looks like the Wild Huntsman of Windsor Range! It is the devil!"

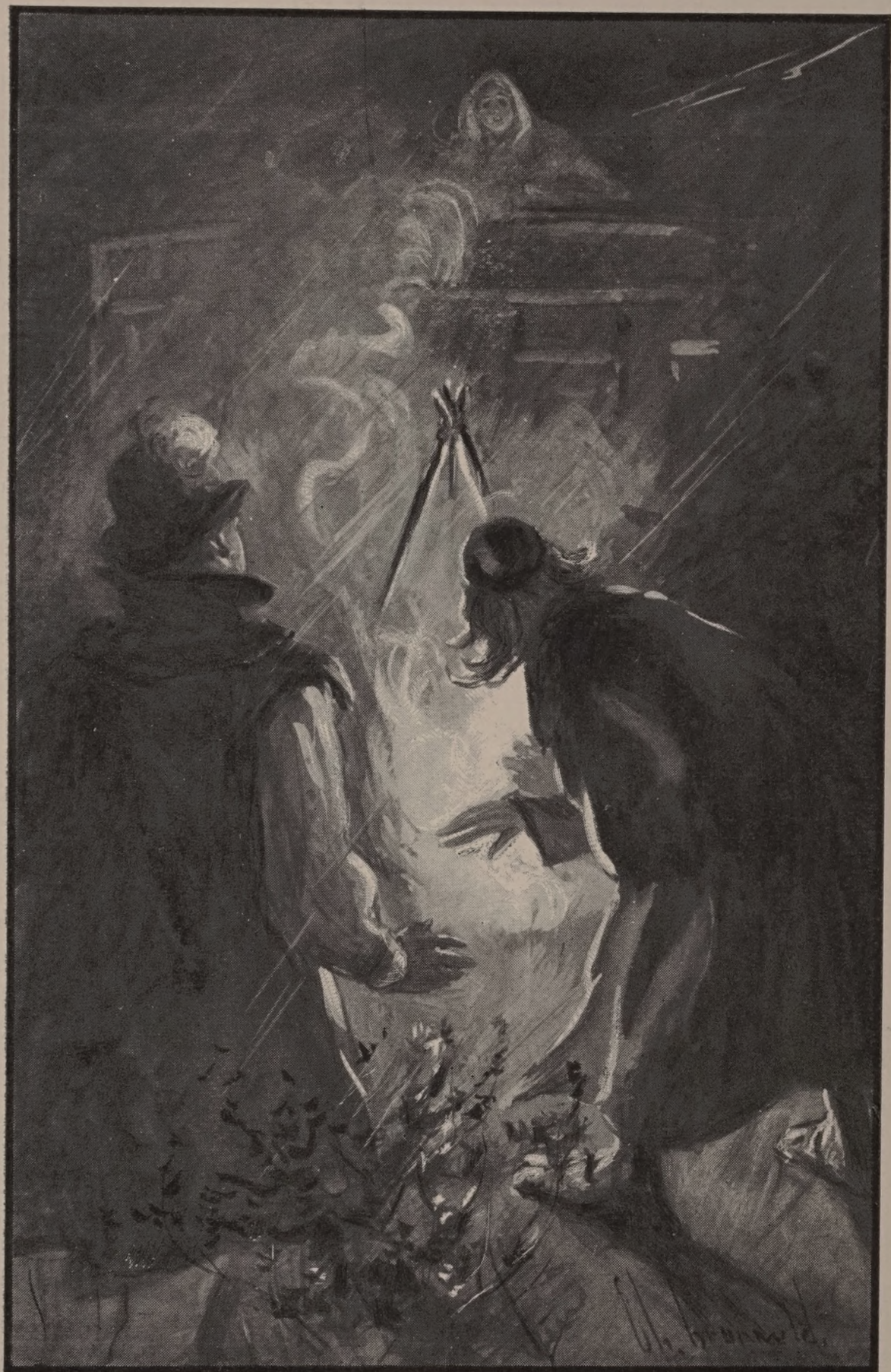
"Pooh, pooh!" returned Fleming. "The Prince of Darkness is not so black as he is painted, or else the ink that Lucifer threw on him would not have made its mark. Have calmness; for courage, I know, you do not lack. You are soon to see the object of your ardent quest."

Then, as if the farther operations could not be helped on by his uninitiated companion, he began to chant one of those incantations common to his clan at the time. Composed of sonorous syllables, the more striking ones were easily held by the unlearned to be names of spirits of power, usually malignant. The artful wonder-worker let his voice, used gruffly, rise and fall with the stress and rest given his phrases, seeming in harmony with the surging and irregular gusts.

Then sounded the midnight chimes, coming brokenly, to which was added a watchman's voice, brought from very far, so as to seem out of the hollow of the tempest.

"Twelve of the night, and Lord be merciful to all Christian souls!"

Earl Dereham had remained standing, firmly enough, but stupefied. He tried vainly to comprehend the rigmale of sounding words, but they came out of unknown tongues. The rising tumult did not daunt him. He looked into the eye of the storm; that light spot around which, in a wrestle of two winds, one on a lower level, the utmost turbulence whirls while preserving this center untouched. This luminosity was directly over the center of the barge. He stared at this cavity in the vapor, as a



"Who is there?"

(See page 29)

criminal on the scaffold looks at the open road in the mob at his execution, where alone the courier with the pardon could gallop up.

The astrologer, in his jumble, became aware of this loss of attention, and glanced at him.

He, too, became spellbound, like his dupe.

It would seem that the electricity overcharging the air had enkindled the phosphorus in the dead wood to which the neglected hulk was turning. The deck-edge toward them glistened, with an unknown light, more blue than red, more white than yellow.

A figure was certainly there; it was robed in white, in a long, flowing garment, deriving shape alone from the contour of the wearer. This was beautiful and exquisite. No statuary of the ancients had carved marble into such agreeable lines, and the curves were each fascinating.

The garment had a kind of hood shrouding the countenance. One could imagine, rather than perceive, the eyes glittering with the color of the magic fires. There could also be imagined that this enrapt gaze comprised terror, horror, and amazement—but the whole thing was too celestial for these emotions not to seem incompatible.

Suddenly, the hanging arms rose, and were folded across the bosom. A voice, also too sweet to be human, abruptly challenged, with the fearlessness of innocence, afraid of neither earthly nor superhuman creatures:

“Who is there?”

“By all the demons, from Ahrimanous to Zorobabel!” burst out the exasperated magician—“a human voice! A

human voice has spoken outside of the magic ring—and the spell is broken! May all the curses——”

“Curse that apparition, and——” Dereham seized up the staff from the earth, upsetting the tripod, cresset and bones——“and I——”

“Nothing will come to our summons now!” and the old conjuror wrung his hands so pitifully that he must have believed in his craft, or was a sublime actor.

“But this apparition——”

Dereham flung down the staff, but before he could leap over the circle of fire the other seized him, with a grip beyond anticipation of his strength.

“Don’t leave the barrier!” almost screamed he, bearing on with all his weight. “You will be snatched away to perdition! That is but a living lure—a snare! Don’t step without!”

But Dereham dashed him down, leaving in his convulsive grasp fragments of his clothing. He trod down one of the fires, and bounded toward the barge.

But, on the instant, as if there were spirits in the ambient air, a whirl of the storm descended upon the space. A great wall of rain came up and fell, as if a wall stopped at the foot and toppled over. Fleming was cast down, and groveled amid the swamped-out embers. Dereham felt caught, as by all the witches at a Sabbath, and lost his footing, as if he had Mercury’s wings without the art to employ them. He was carried toward the river—which boiled; the osiers were beaten flat, like a carpet; he was laid on them, and, luckily, caught at the pliant rods. The trees whipped; the branches were detached and hurled at

other boughs, which they broke off. The level ground was covered with such rubbish.

Fleming rose, struggling with his gown, blown about his head and neck.

"The rain, the rain!" muttered he, smothering. "It is like as if we had brought on the second Deluge, prophesied by the school of *Nicomaque*!"

He got his head free, and, cowering down, tried to look out around him through the downpour.

"But he must not be lost, under my guard!" moaned he; "he is the king's favorite—as his own brother! They are linked by the stars! I have read that! Oh, my lord! Ethelwolf, where are you?"

He floundered toward the river, impelled by the gale.

"Confound the man!" muttered he; "he is too brave to call for help!"

He reached the bank, or where the bank was, three feet under the seething water. He thought he saw a struggling form.

"But he must be saved! King Henry will make me answer life for life!"

Tearing off his raiment, staggering and stumbling, slipping and sliding, on he went, now in the water and recovering his foothold, then wading desperately, with barely power to keep erect. He followed the body, which no longer resisted the course. Dereham was stunned.

'Tis the lethargy! The drug binds him as a corpse!" moaned the conjuror. "I rendered him unable to stand the current! Without that, he would "shoot" London

Bridge, and come up, smiling, before the Palace at Greenwich!"

Like one whose life, indeed, depended upon this one in peril, forgetting his own incessant danger, he continued this mad race with the insensible body. Rarely did he see it; but his instinct was trusted to; he went on. He escaped a hundred modes of death, for the boughs fell like arrows in a battle. The lightning added a new terror, for its bolts rived the oaks and elms, and made him fear that he would be a target to the elements at whom his experiments had often mocked.

At last, he fell, exhausted. But, while praying, in his last moment of despair, he saw, by the light of the weir, kindled by the lightning, but soon extinguished by the rain, the body of his young companion. He dragged himself to it with his final strength. It was on the dam, embedded in the rushes; he laid himself by it, as if to die there or to try to warm it to life.

He repeated, in attitude, the old father and son in the old master's picture of the Deluge.

About four o'clock, he sat up. Cold aroused him. He felt in an inner pouch for a stimulant, which he carried in a case of flexible leather, and drank, greedily, before trying to employ the same medicament upon his friend.

"What cross luck!" grumbled he.

There was a gentle rain falling, which, after the pour, was a boon.

The thunder rolled on the Surrey hills.

"All was going so well!"

He parted the young man's teeth, with a choking move-

ment used by surgeons, and inserted his finger, dipped in the alcohol.

Seeing that this unlocked his jaws and suppld his tongue, he smiled, at last.

"I did not miss a line in that incantation, which certainly is effectual. I believe it more efficacious than that of the Tyanian Magus, and it would have raised the Chimera, who answers all demands, if—ah, he is coming to! I thank the stars!"

Revived by his infinitesimal but powerful resuscitant, he dragged his prize to the firm land.

"What was it we raised!" The voice was womanly—the figure astral! "Zounds! Am I wrong in my figuring? Why may not the line which crosses the king's and becomes entangled be—not Dereham's, close as they are—but another's—the other's? Oh, let me be disembarrassed of this young man, and I will discover who that apparition is among women!"

Taking a strong dose of his elixir, he shouldered the body, and carried it, with the ease of a miller carrying a sack of meal, to the first inn by the waterside.

Changing his clothes, but refusing breakfast, he came out, after recommending the lord to the host and his hostler. He halted in the road, musing:

"She stood on that abandoned barge!" said he. "Strange and ugly nest for that beauty! And yet, the butterfly emerges from a soiled and bedraggled grub!"

CHAPTER II.

A BIRD WITH WINGS BROADER THAN ITS NEST.

The air of neglect and loneliness about the barge and upon it was studied. Had the two adventurers had the supernatural vision one of them, at least, pretended, he would have seen that the barge was not only inhabited, but habitable.

It would almost have seemed as if the interior had not been dismantled when the bark was given up to the vagrants. What had been pillaged was replaced.

The roomy, if inelegant, stools, armseats, and settees were heaped with cushions; the thick and fluffy *arras* hung so as to prevent any drafts through cracks of the beams, and to include the light from lamps burning fine oil. Pictures of some value were on the walls of the one great cabin, the inside of which was divided into three compartments by hangings.

The dressing table and toilet accompaniments were in silver, tortoise-shell and ivory, and, while old, were good art specimens.

In the east end was a kitchen, but the cooking was slight, as food was brought from Chertsey, or another village, by a trusty man-servant.

The woman always in attendance on the mistress of this strange abode was a north-country "body," about fifty, but hard as iron and with set features, expressing

more shrewdness and firmness than good humor; but she was tender in her devotedness, which was extreme.

On the morning of the day when the two men came to Dullmarsh for their unhallowed ceremony, the barge, open to the west by the hatches in the deck being drawn off, was suffused with the sunshine and the balmy breath off the innumerable natural beds of wild flowers—flowers cultivated since out of all resemblance to their original hues and shapes, and also losing the rich aroma of early days.

In this perfumed and golden atmosphere, the mistress was standing by her table, looking out, discontentedly, at the scenery to the west, that incomparable upper vale of the Thames. Had she been peering on “the frosty Caucasus,” the disgusted curl of the lips would not have been more contemptuous.

She was the beautiful creature who was later in the day to interrupt the conjuration and seem to call the storm upon its ministers.

In the divided-off interior, the servant-woman was droning, in a voice scarcely intelligible, from her teeth being worn down to the gums by diet of harsh oatcake, a macaroni of old border ballads, of which this fragment came to the young woman’s ears, though unheeded, because it had no novelty :

“Whether a lord or but a laird,
Truth, ’tis but little that she cared!
’Twas e’er she replied: ‘Good sir, let be!
If ever I have a man—Blue-cap for me!’
There came a Scot, in a blue Glengarry—
‘That is the man for whom I tarry.’”

But the listener, eager to find fault with anything, re-

sented the incongruity in the sentiment and the singer's own prejudices.

"Hypocrite that it makes Dame Kennedy out to be!" said she, with playful bitterness; "nobody could be more grudgeful against the Scots, bigoted Lancashiran that she is!"

The old woman entered, with a large silver waiter, on which was neatly set out a cold meal, with meat, fish, some parsley, and a mound of fresh butter, flanked by white flour cakes, done in a ring of silver still confining their puffed-up sides. The whole was appetizing. But it would appear that the maid understood the caprices of her mistress as to eating, since she had added to the jug of ale a bottle of wine, which, by its cork being intact in its cobwebbed neck, showed that it was genuine and long preserved in a cellar.

She put all on a sideboard, having a flap-leaf, which she raised so that the lady could sit up to it.

"Now, Mistress Catherine," said she, with cheerfulness, though her woodeny voice could not express much sweetness, "fall to! You were again passing a sleepless night! How late we are; it's that Hugh, dawdling in coming from the lodge. He says that, since you turn aloof from the tidbits of his wife's devising, she has not heart to cook, and he none to carry the cakes which you spurn! The sun is well upon the hills!"

"The sunrise was magnificent!" Catherine yawned, without trying to hide it behind her long hand.

The dame opened the bottle with a butler's care, and

aptly filled a silver-gilt goblet. The scent was delicious, and made her mouth water.

"There, that is splendid wine! The king is lucky to drink a better! Drink, for good wine rejoices the heart!"

Catherine sipped of the liquor, which encouraged her to take about half.

"Ah, who could resist that?" said Kennedy, gladly. "That's the buckler in the strife of virtue against fortune!"

"Finish it, Kennedy, and give me only that crust of cake!"

Dame Kennedy looked at the lovely countenance, and sighed herself at the eyes being red, the cheeks slightly sunk, and the lips quivering with nervousness.

"I grant it is weariness of the same old story that pulls down your strength. But I, who came out of the cold, bleak north, may well wonder at your tiring of this enchanting land—rich, green and mellow! There are flowers here which should banish tears from any eyes!"

"Surely, woman, I should laud it, if I saw it for the first time; but to view it all day of every day in the year upon years! One must tire of the sweetest bell, since it has but the one note."

"Ah, little Lady Catherine, I could continue to view it for twice your span of time, and still wish it would bless me to my last gaze out of my worn eyes!" She corked the bottle and with her rough hand smoothed the broken wax upon the mouth. "But I am a poor creature, too lowly to waste my scanty time in wishing and fancying, but still less in fretting and fuming. I find my fill of glad-

ness in things within my reach, and I do not risk my neck standing on precarious footing to grasp at what is beyond me."

"Oh, you with no aspirations have no grief!"

"No grief, little lady? Ah, child, to see your house burn over the heads of your two babes, and nothing left unburnt but the sill where the blood of your slain goodman soaked it so that it would not become ashes! Ah, that was a contented man, too, whose only prayer, like mine, was 'All's well.' Rest him!"

"Ah, dame, you are near the dying of the day—I at the dawn! I can take no more interest in the things peopling the limited field around me than a bird does in fishes!"

"I don't know—a kingfisher——"

"You know what I mean," returned the dame, testily. "At least you can go to the villages and hear the gossip—gather the news. I am cooped up here, as it were, a prisoner."

"Not a prisoner—you are in a cage, because—because there are hawks about and you would be exchanged into a real prisoner, most like."

"Ah, the wine has unlocked your rigid tongue!" cried the girl, triumphantly. "Dear dame," she went on, with an irresistible voice, "now we are coming to it. Why am I cooped up here?"

Dame Kennedy set her mouth firm and shut her eyes briefly.

"Still, you won't tell? Ah, it was by a slip only that I learned where we are! At least, we are near London—

the imperial city! Ah, how contradictory to be so lonely here, while over there——”

The woman grinned, for the direction was not accurate.

“Somewhere is the teeming town of thousands!”

Kennedy went on clearing away the untouched breakfast things.

“It seems to me in the sunset, in the summer lightnings,” continued Catherine, looking off on the horizon, “that I have descried the multitudinous spires and steeples and pinnacles of church, tower and steeple, over there, like a sheaf of spears, amid which palaces and castles are embedded. Oh, it must be glorious! gorgeous! Am I ever to taste of that plenty’s cup?”

Kennedy made a sympathetic grimace, as she bore away the trayful.

“Have you been in London?”

Kennedy returned, having opened the bottle of wine again, for her lips were wet and red.

“No; but I have lived in Derby!”

“Derby? A molehill!” sneered the lady.

“I am not sure of that, please ye! Derby has a brook, and what is the Thames but a large brook? Derby has a stone bridge, and London Bridge is only a trifle longer! Derby has——”

“Then, you have, like I, seen nothing, not seeing London! Oh, to have a home in London!”

“Oh, you will have a home in London, surely! It’s an old saying—the chicken is bred in the country, but goes to London to be—eaten!”

“Saints forbid it! Eaten, indeed!” but she smiled.

"You cannot make yourself a tough morsel! You are a tempting one! Yes, you will be wed, one of these blessed days—when we have a new king!"

"Why not under the present king?"

It was clear that the dame was garrulous beyond her custom; indeed, never had the quasi-prisoner seen her so wrestling with some powerful mandate, which had kept her reticent. She tried to increase this melting mood.

"Why may I not be mated to some one, providing a home in London, under King Henry?"

The old woman fumbled with her cap-strings, undoing and tying them up, nervously.

"Do you believe in soothsaying?" replied she, with a question—"you, who believe lately in nothing?"

"Oh, I am not such an infidel as all that," said Catherine, pleasantly, wishing to keep the other affable. "I believe what you tell me, at any rate! Whom else do I see to speak with?"

"Well, it was prophesied by a canny creature—the Wise Woman of Derby—in a word, a crabbed *callet*—but spoke the truth, as many a bit of evidence verified her thereafter!"

"What! What! The prophecy matters, not the mouthpiece! What said she of me?"

"Oh, you were a babe! They brought her to you, and she dropped on her knees to you, in your little bunk in the wall! She thanked her stars that she had been led to say her say over you! You were fated to be lovely among women, proud among the great, loved widely, hated widely, too——"

"That would be envy! Go on!"

"In a few words, you were destined to wed loftily, nobly, richly!"

"The gates to the altar are golden for me?" She clasped her hands, and her whole lineaments were radiant. Her eyes became like gems. The witness of this transfiguration was almost grateful that she could impart so much joy.

"Oh, Dame Kennedy, I could kiss you! I shall revere you as my mother! I don't know as I care to learn more than this! I shall be rich, noble, high-placed! I thank you, voice of the Fates! You are an old precious!" and she embraced the dame, heartily.

She looked around, to give the harbinger a present, as was the usage.

"Well, I do not see how I can now reward you fittingly. But, if a tithe of this comes true—not that I expect less—you shall inherit all I have at the present holding!"

"The Wise Woman never spoke astray!" resumed Kennedy, gratified at the impression.

"Ah, at last you are one of those rare ones who speak with unveiled words! Listen to me now! If I should win a rich and noble mate, I—I will go and live on the Thames' bankside, in a palace of our own—his palace, Kennedy! There will be a garden to saunter in, large as"—she opened out her arms, as to embrace the entire landscape—"large enough to tire one out with the stroll before dinner! There shall be a whole stable of horses to ride, and bear my horse-litter; and, by the water gate, shall rest, for my bidding, such a gallant galley, ample as this,

and far more resplendent than when it was upbearing the poor Queen Ann! Over the fens we shall go hawking, with falconers and pages and squires!"

"How you rattle on, like a bladder full of peas!"

"But you should still be with me, dame! You are not one of the kind of friends so easy to find—who find fault; you should find out something in the way of pleasure for me every day, and we should share the new delicacy together!"

She paused, looked at her nurse, roguishly, and whispered:

"Bring back the wine and some game pie! I feel that I must feast now. You have made this day a holiday. I won't fast upon it. Ah, everything will have its flavor to-day now. How gleeful am I that you have spoken out!"

Dame Kennedy returned into the recess for the victuals.

"She does not ask after her parents, or her kindred! This foretelling has alone penetrated her brain. I don't believe I was wise to let her know, what she must, some time, know! Ah, share her bounty and good fortune is all very well; but the Wise Woman coupled the gold cup, with bitter lees, in the draft. Must I share that, too?"

However, she returned with the tray and the wine.

Catherine had continued to expand in the ecstasy so easily excited. She seemed to see the full beauty of the landscape, and her pale cheek was deeply colored, her lips plumped out, and wore a regaling smile; her eyes danced.

"Yes, you shall still dwell with me, Kennedy! And you, being rustic, should accompany me when I go to choose a country retreat—a bower, with garden, fruitful

and verdant, flowering like the mead where Venus trod—with the sheep on the lea, and red deer in the brake! We should meander there, along a more crystal stream than this, while my brave husband should be warring for the king! I will be the castellaine—the lady in court and yard! A lady? Look, ye, Kennedy! I should have but to say: ‘Do you this, or that,’ and my will would be executed!”

She stalked up and down, trailing her morning gown like a court dress and tossing her head. Her extravagant gestures and laugh frightened a pair of martins away from the opening where they came every morning to have the fragments of the meal, usually disdained.

“This is all very fine, but out of place in a hungry girl!” said the practical waiting-woman. “Pray you, sit down and eat this time. The breakfast will be the noon munchon.” She cut the pasty for her and poured out the wine.

“Drink with me, good dear! This is a festival, I tell you! So feels a young lordling, I guess, coming into his own!” She ate ravenously, and drank two cups of wine, laughing hysterically all the while.

“So I am cooped up here because a prophetess tells us I am to be married highly? Odd, is it not? Better to have put me in a convent, to learn what beseems a lady meet for a lord!”

“Have a care! The prophecy said that all depended on your outliving the king; it was said——”

“What was said?” seeing that her informant, in spite of the generous Portugal wine, was hesitating.

"That if you married in this king, the Eighth Henry's, reign, ill would betide you!"

"Oh, dear, how provoking! For the next king—that is, his son Edward, is but a boy, and puny at that! This is dreadful——"

"My dear child, these wizards are all alike. They never give a slice of luck without one side being spread with gall, though the upper was smeared with honey. Every boon is set against a ban!"

"Oh, I will wait, then! To be loved—to have the riches, the castle, the gardens, the deer park, the sheep pastures, while awaiting the wedding! Besides, the king is not likely to live——"

"Sh! That is treason!" interrupted Dame Kennedy, looking around, in deep fear. "Your folks and my man lost their all for half that kind of talk!" She crossed herself, and held up her folded fingers in the air to repel evil spirits.

Catherine was slightly dulled; this allusion to her family, whom she had not thought of, cut her as a tacit reproach.

"Oh, yes, my family," said she, frowning. "It is because of them that I am cooped up here—with such a magnificent future pledged me!"

"Why, it is not they to blame, lass! Why does the mother-bird, in her mysterious language, bid the nestlings not to peep over the edge when she leaves them reluctantly?"

"Because they may fall out——"

"Because the foiler is heard in the thicket!"

"Were they hunted—may I be sought for?"

"You are in danger all the time! Your father and two brothers were on the wrong side in the great Northern rising for the old creed. None of the three would fly to France or Scotland, but stood to the last, dying in their steel jackets rather than be lugged into prison and molder there, drawing on the three hundred gibbets which adorned the long line from the Peak to Robin's Stride!"

"You have seen this, mother?" said the girl, in an awed voice.

"I saw the gibbets, with the wretches on them, tormented by the carrion birds!" and the dame, hardened as she was, choked a sob or two before continuing. "The hangman stripped the dead as their betters stripped the living of all their lands, flocks, herds and belongings! It was a desert—such was the law! A hard law, but it is the law, the judges said, some of them weeping as they pronounced the sentences dealing death and poverty to their old, old friends. Mine own humble folk were beaten, *chevied*, scourged hence—for the Tudor spares neither lord nor lout in his enmity! A bloodthirsty lion!"

"A great king!" murmured Catherine. "Was my father a rebel, then?"

"Yes, then he was a rebel! Before that he had been a most faithful subject! He had stood up for all the good old things! He went down under the abbey walls, the holy images, the sacred vessels; I can see his pale face now, gashed and marred, in a cold sea of melted silver, which had frozen around and held him down. But why

“speak of those times? The castles are ruins, and the ruins themselves have perished by this!”

“But, after these internal actions, there comes peace, pardon, restoration, amnesty! The king is good-natured and jolly!”

“Yes; we in the North heard of the proclamations; but the confiscations and slaughter went on much the same. That is why we old birds are not caught with chaff!” She smiled, dryly.

Never had the young captive heard so much to enlighten her from her affectionate jailer, close and fine as her countrywomen are. She blessed the juice of the Spanish grape.

“Mother!” cried she, clasping her hands and seeing that the confidant was really sorrowing.

“But fleeting is the glee of the cruel! The Tudors came in with blood on their hands; they continue to add to their stain, and burden of broken limbs and racked hearts! What a king! Who considers the day lost, so the court says, under the breath, when there has not been a noble humbled or a queen beheaded?”

“You exaggerate, dame! He is a great monarch, our Henry, for all these misdeeds, committed, perhaps, by his bad advisers, nobles jealous of one another!”

“A tyrant, a monopolizer, a guzzler! who has baths of wine like this, and never tires of wooing and wedding!”

“Why blame him who seeks without being despairing? He seeks a ring set with a true diamond; so far he has found the nuptial ring set with false glass!”

“What morals! Fie! A man should be content with his deserts! A man must take his slice of the pudding and risk that he does not get the date!”

“But a king! You judge him by the scale of common mortals!”

“My child, he has shown us too much the verity of things—the shallowness of loftiness! When he proved that the Pope was but a man, and that his bull could not overthrow the throne of England, he undid himself. We know that he, too, is but a man, having man’s weak joints, with all man’s vices! One of these days——”

“I shall have you imprisoned for high treason, dame!” and the girl shook her finger, irritated, she knew not why.

There was a pause, but the girl was not able to remain long in serious thought.

When the woman returned from putting away the eatables for the last time, she found her ward not at all meditative.

She was not one to wear mourning when a festival toilet was on the hooks of the dressing-closet.

She sprang up.

“Dame,” said she, “how you have unsettled me with your re-echoed prophecy! Rich, ennobled, wedded in exaltation? I felt that I could not be doomed to drag out my life here, on this dislocated, mud-embedded barge, lashed by the rains, cracked by the rime, rotting in the sedge! Lonesome, unwholesome, discarded, shunned by the vilest wanderer! Between decaying wooden walls! What a home for a young girl with dainty tastes, over-filled with undefined longings; but they are not the less

spurring and galling, for all that! Look, you, good dame! I would rather that clothes-chest were my coffin, those curtains my winding-sheet, and my last bed the river bottom, instead of the predestined brass-lettered tomb of marble!"

"I see that the foretelling took root! There are days, and this is one, when the whims of your brain frighten me!" She went up to the open hatch, where Catherine was letting the cool breeze fan her beating temples, and stroked her hair, fondly. "Trust me, you ought not to let this fiddle-faddle prey upon you! That dwelling on the future will never bring white hairs to a quiet grave!"

"My mind is my mint, nurse! My dreams now may mount on golden clouds! Leave me them, dear old dame, since you enkindled them anew!"

"I see that I have given you them for a close companion, more welcome than I was!" said Kennedy, sadly. "I am getting short of sight, but I saw, since a twelvemonth, that my presence annoyed you——"

"Never!"

"Yes, I vex you."

Catherine embraced her, and held her in her arms.

"You are indispensable to me, and unfair in that to yourself. But I will make a clean breast of it, since you have been at last frank to me, with still some reservations, eh? I am not quite so miserable when utterly by myself. I hear, in the silence, a strange voice whispering to me. I see quaint forms flit around the old boat, and taunt me

to leap over the side and follow them! Then, the loneliness is peopled, and all is lively for me!"

"Oh, we are spied! Hugh and the verderers are not alert on the watch! They are bribed; they——"

"No, no; my visitors are not of this world. It is all imaginary, but they are charming company to me!"

"Sweet saints! These girls can draw goldfish out of the cask whence I might take only herrings!"

"Oh, the enchanting chain of figures in this round game of hand-in-hand! They appear on the turf, but they mount up and spin around in the air—in the sky, above the trees, above the ether! They form a line of splendor and color—a rainbow of dancing atoms, with a luminous trail from yonder to the heavens!"

"This is impiety!" said the old woman, only half shocked. "The flame of the last day will fall on this house——"

"House? Hovel!"

"My child, nobody but Jacob climbed the rainbow, and an angel pushed him down!"

"Your Scripture, dame, is like your——"

"An angel pushed him down, I am telling you, and broke his leg, or rib, or something! What do you know of the Bible? Not that you may not have mine without the asking; but you pass your time, when you do read, over the song books and the 'History of Unfortunate Loves!' "

"I begged for music instruments, but you would not let me!"

"Ah, child, men are clever, but their spinnets and vir-

ginals have not yet the voice of song birds! In vain would Hugh tell the passengers on the road, who might hear you singing and your thrumming, that it was the robin, or the warbler, thrumming with their wings on a dry sprig; they would sneak toward this boathouse, and the cat would be out!"

"The cat? I thank you!"

"Keep off the rainbows, dear; they are weak and flimsy foothold! Do not rise higher than the earth, and the Lord knows that it is unstable as water! Child, fear the fall!"

Catherine let the woman leave her caressing embrace. She laid her hand on the hatch-beam, and went on self-communing.

Off the river the heated air was rising; mites danced in the upward pillars, and atoms crossed the rays, glittering like scales off fiery lizards. To her gaze, suddenly inflamed, as she had said, the rushes were peopled with fays, sylphs, and water-babies. The swans sailed among them without seeing them, like the profane among the guardian angels that serve without being perceptible. Something in the air smiled on her as on a sister. If she were to let down her hair, she might, she thought, draw up from the stranded ship's side a young and charming prince!

Some of her babbling reached the woman, who watched her.

"She has learned all the fairy tales without my teaching her!" she observed, wonderingly. "The novice in the nunnery can see in the granite effigy of a hoary martyr a

young gallant; and here, Catherine, without any prompting from my side, looks over the bulwarks each day to see a knight gallop up to lay his love at her feet. Happy age when one has but to shut the eyes to see all fairyland stream by as in a pageant!"

"What do you say, Kennedy?" asked the girl, abruptly.

"Nothing!"

A little later, Kennedy equipped herself with hood and cape. She took a staff and a scrip for purchases.

"It is market at Brentford," said she; "I shall borrow the miller's pony and go over."

Catherine sighed; never she dared but once to propose going with her.

"Suppose," said she, pretending playfulness, "suppose I run away in your absence?"

"You would not do that, damsel, after what I told you; though that was when we first came here!"

"I may have forgot the warning; what was it?"

The woman looked very grave.

"There are those in wait who would shoot you, mistress, if you were seen wide of this 'coop,' as you not illy call it!"

"They would shoot a woman—a young girl?"

"Yes; as they would their own lord's son, if it were the lord's orders. And they are north country archers, out of Robin Hood's country—the Never-Fails!"

"Shoot me?"

"It is the orders!"

Dame Kennedy shook her head, regarding her charge dubiously.

"I leave you at ease, since you cannot be lonely with

your guests of fays, elves and hobgoblins! Be queen of their court, little lady! God keep you from the dart which flieth by day and eke by night!"

"The dart! Are you not misquoting the Script? Is it the pestilence?"

"It is the pestilent Cupid's dart, mistress! He rarely misses his mark now, though he is blindfolded! He would be an archer more deadly than Robin Hood if he had his eyes skinned!"

At the bulwark she paused, compelled to let down a rope and stepladder convenient for her age and bulk, and then descended.

"Draw it up after me!" she said. "Good-by."

At the foot of the ladder she waited till she saw it being hauled up, slowly, and as if reluctantly.

"She is trying her wings!" muttered she, as she went to the ford and crossed, with a foot used to tarn and brae. "I must tell them that my watch is too much for an old woman. They will have to uncape the hawk; or it will fly with the blinder on, and fall prey to the first who spies her!"

The girl could not repose. She pulled her few books out, took up embroidery, only to throw it down, with Penelope's irritation, and paced the restricted space like a caged fawn.

The old woman returned at eve, without any news. She complimented the girl on her submission.

Catherine did not question her, contrary to habit. She had scrutinized the neighborhood, wondering more than ever if the isolation had been caused by guardians who

had with authority prohibited wanderers from piercing these marshes. She doubted the nurse; it was to her incredible that her confinement was to be enforced by armed murderers in the hedges. How could one frail girl be thought to be a danger to the king? How could an old witch's babble years before have weight with sensible people at this time? Who was she to influence a jailer so mighty and so rich as to keep archers and woodmen, as well as Dame Kennedy, years faithful, in his pay.

Supper she partook of with unwonted zest. It seemed to her that she resembled the prisoner to whom the word has been passed that he may expect an attempt to be made to assist his escape. For this flight, no more weakening by fasting, repining, or despair, he must prepare himself for unusual exertion by proper cares.

That night was terrible. When she heard her nurse fast asleep, breathing stentoriously like the aged, she envied that repose. But in vain she courted it. She was tormented with all sorts of fancies engendered by her fever. She heard those many petty noises of the country which break rest on stormy nights.

At last it seemed to her that—not her train of fays, nymphs and imps made the circuit of her prison-house—but something more material. There were steps and voices, perceptible to her tense nerves and unbearable until she should convince herself of their reality.

At all other times she would have acquainted her companion with her perhaps idle apprehensions, but this time she rose stealthily.

On going upon the deck, which was the roof, like an

Oriental dwelling, she was refreshed by the coolness preceding the tempest and dispelling the sultriness of a thunderous approach.

Finally she spied the two figures of the alchemist and his adept, and she watched with more curiosity than dread their unaccountable actions.

For a time she believed they might be the guards of which Kennedy had spoken; their proceedings resembled, as far as she was a judge, those of sentinels, going into camp.

But never had she seen a fire in the night close to her abode. When the flames burst up and formed the triangle around the circle, and she saw the skull gleam white in the lurid glare of the tarry wood, she was horrified.

The old man's jargon recalled all she had heard from her nurse, full of old country superstitions, and she feared that she was witnessing that most abhorred of forbidden malpractices—an attempt to communicate with the outcasts of this world—the demons.

The magician was in keeping with the mystic movements and the ghastly show.

But the fitful light fell on his comrade, and in the interstices of the black smoke she could discern that Ethelwolf was young, pleasing and handsome! She began to regard him as no accomplice in the deviltry, but a dupe, a victim, whom perchance her interposition might save.

Thereupon, becoming human, and inspired with hate for the diabolical and uncanny, she raised her cry of "Who is there?" and hardly was aware that the storm burst over her.

Dame Kennedy, aroused, ran up and dragged her in. She closed the hatch and held her in the darkness until the war of the elements had been spent.

At morning the dame listened to the girl's appeal to be let her see what had happened to the innocent companion of the conjuror.

It was too late. Not even the little fires showed where they had burned. All was washed away or beaten to a level.

She might believe it was a dream.

She told of the sight so confusedly that Kennedy could but believe that the whole was some ordinary scene, magnified and distorted by the fantastic lights of a thunder-storm.

Besides, the excitement of the night and Catherine's exposure to the terrible rain, which had in some part flooded the barge, threw the poor girl into a fever.

The nurse attended her well, for three days and nights, and then began to despair. She was on the point of determining to await only for the morrow. Then she would consult her superiors at Percy House, who gave her the orders for the keeping of this singular captive in this singular durance.

That night Catherine became worse. Kennedy passed the hours in restraining her from rising and flinging herself out in the weather, regardless of everything. She was impressed with a vision which beckoned her to follow. She spoke of a height, with a glittering summit, to which she was fated to climb.

But with the cockcrow this preternatural and frantic

power subsided. She sank into an exhaustion which gave the old woman assurance that she could not leave her couch for some time.

With a prayer, she kissed the pallid face and left the almost lifeless creature to seek assistance wiser than her own.

She went, as was her usual course when was needed a gentle horse for her riding, not a triumph of equestrianism, to the miller's.

But on the way she called in at the cottage where Hugh, the verderer, chief of the watchers upon the barge and its valuable tenant, should receive information of the latter's grievous state of health.

She met with mingled bliss and hate here. The woodman was in his bed in the wall recess, having been felled by a bough of an elm. He was following two men of suspicious mien, strangers, when the storm met him with its first onslaught.

Luckily, a herbalist, seeking "simples" in the morning before the dew was off, was seen by the man's wife. Called in, he had done up the wounds and set a bone with great dexterity and tenderness, the more rare when surgery was a blend of brutality, like the bone-setter's and bone-rubber's art of later times.

The overjoyed wife, seeing her man go off into slumber after having howled and tossed half the night, made the herbalist stay to breakfast.

Acquainted with the plight of the young lady in the barge-house, he volunteered to administer to her. Dame Kennedy hesitated. But the man's age and venerable as-

pect, the kindness he had shown to the verderer, and the remembrance that her charge was insensible, determined her to have the latter doctored without consulting her principals.

So she renounced her journey, not to her taste, let the cottager transmit the warning to the personage at Percy House answerable over all for Catherine being kept perdu, and returned with the old sage.

It was Fleming. Recovered from the effects of his drenching and the fatigue, he had as soon as possible retraced his steps toward the old dwelling on the Thames reach, bound to satisfy his doubts about the apparition more or less in response to his invocation being of this sublunary sphere.

Accustomed to shape things to his mold, he took this falling in with his project with calmness.

For all his self-command he could not wholly hide his amaze and admiration on seeing the lovely prisoner. He was not blamed by Kennedy, who would, for that matter, have felt insulted if her beauty had not received some such tribute, even from a graybeard.

He carried with him drugs, and, after giving a potion in a glass of the famous wine, he left the girl, surely in convalescence, to her nurse.

During the short time he stayed there he sounded the latter with the cunning of a grand inquisitor. On some points she was silent as to her ward, but on others explicit.

As he returned to the passenger barge to carry him to London he meditated:

“This girl is sequestrated because the same thought

strikes good judges of the ideal of a court beauty for this king as myself. There is some mystery here, which coincides with the trite story of her guardian, that a prophecy indicated she is 'morsel for the king!' I agree with her and them. With these particulars which the crone affords of her birth, and the rest, I will cast her planetary course."

When he reached Westminster, where he disembarked, he had his plan.

"The king is in that mood when he will, to dissipate his fag of mind, throw himself into the wars impending, or be detained at home only by a strong tie. It remains with me, who require him in town, and not to die of a campaign fever in the north, so leaving me at the mercy of the regency around his son, to find this tie and bind it on him! But I must move quickly. I mistrust that bold and independent Dereham. He has shrunk aloof from me since I saved his life. Instead of gratitude and a filial affection, he will not let me see him. He is studying on some conceit which puzzles me. Since he had the Princess Margaret fall in love with him, he is not the same boy!"

He was sad, for in such old men, lonely, the affection of a young man almost recoups them for the absence of family.

He passed the night in study; whether there were grounds for his calculations, or whether he in some way cheated himself, knowing his own ends, he adopted the forecast of the Wise Woman of Derbyshire. He could show by the plan before him that, given the nativity of

Catherine, she was destined to cross, it would appear, the life-line of Henry the Eighth.

There the revelation became vague, or at least confused.

In the morning, having slept on his problem, being one of those students who solve riddles overnight, and awake simply to carry out the result, he dressed with the intention of removing Catherine from her peculiar prison.

He had sent out spies, the same as the king had continued from the elaborate spy system of Cardinal-Minister Wolsey. They were instructed to discover who presided over this singular alienation of a girl who seemed but to have beauty to make her remarkable. He had a deep knowledge of the aristocracy, though not all his life in the realm, and yet there was no missing heiress, spite of the many breaking-ups of families on account of the internecine wars, answering to this description.

He wished to be informed before he moved toward taking Catherine into his charge, if she would consent. He intended at all hazards to use the dread name of the king, if she were, as he suspected, a care to some high family. The mention of the prophecy brought the matter within his province, so he regarded it, and from the time when he considered the girl as a daughter favored by the stars, he resolved to aid her toward her destiny, while profiting by the rise.

It must be remembered that the servants of the black arts, while bound not to profit directly, found many excuses for lining their pouches indirectly.

This was all very brilliant, and he journeyed up the river with mirth, but he experienced the dismay and shock of the boy who has found a bird's nest but respects it until the inmates are grown old enough to be removed.

The nest was empty. The bird, or birds, had flown.

In plain language, Catherine and her nurse were gone; the barge was empty and the vagrants, with their vulture-like scent, had learned in a few hours of the absence of protectors. Not only had they come in such force as to clear out the contents, but, Master Hugh, being an invalid, the protectors, set by the unknown potentate at Percy House, were badly beaten by the party.

Add to it all, as a kind of bonfire over their victory and retreat with the pillage, the ruffians had applied the torch to the royal barge. Fleming, stopped aghast by the immense concourse of villagers from all around, could only see a column of smoke go up, vastly larger and higher and more injurious than those he had kindled on the same spot a few nights before.

He rallied his spies around him; but, this time, they were at fault. A week passed and yet he could obtain no intelligence about the girl and her long-time companion.

He taxed his brain to see if he had, during his attendance, inspired any terrors, but the cottager assured him that his kindness was ever memorable; Kennedy had also assured her of that in the brief time before she disappeared with her ward, never letting a clew drop to their whereabouts, although they were the best of friends and had come out of the Peak region together.

Mortified, feeling that he was played against by a su-

perior hand, a great reflection on one who rated himself keener than lord chancellors and chief justices, the Fleming returned to town, leaving his agents to pursue what they pronounced a useless quest.

“I must enlist the king on my side,” said he, reasoning with great sense of the Tudor’s preponderance in all matters, high and low, petty and prodigious. “I warrant me that I and the king will overcome whatever forces are leagued to balk the fated beauty’s progress to her promised station.”

Suddenly he clapped his hand to his brow.

“Why not make her his queen?” muttered he. Then, looking around with much circumspection, he added, but without fluttering his lips, “I owe him that compensation!”

CHAPTER III.

THERE IS NO PLACE SO CLOSE THAT DISCONTENT CANNOT
LODGE AT EASE.

At the end of the old wild deer park of South Dereham, is a nook which it would be hard for the uninformed to find on the longest day.

The remains of a Saxon barrow, where the dead of a considerable battle were buried; another mound may be the vestiges of a Roman fort; and the cottage is built for one story of the recently dislodged stones of a religious edifice.

This cottage had been a gamekeeper's, but the tenants had been hastily ejected that it might receive Catherine and her inseparable nurse.

There were natural terraces, all planted with sweet flowers, but conspicuous was the rose, trained as standard, a tall stem and a glorious bunch of fragrant and delighting bloom.

A fountain issued from an old and maimed statue's urn, and trickled over green sward like a carpet, letting waterfowl of foreign origin disport in the little pools.

The cottage was finished over the stone with wood and plaster, giving a checkered effect, charming under its screen of ivy, and the whole embosomed in evergreen oaks.

At the little door, which had an extension, almost a

room in itself, Dame Kennedy was sitting, wearing an immense pair of horn spectacles and trying to read the sixpenny book of the latest songs, bought of a peddler at the marketing place.

Being one who made merry even when it went against the grain, for all her hard, set features, she could not show much jollity, but her tone, as she hummed, revealed that she was happier now than she had been for many a day before.

"To-night," muttered she, ceasing her song-learning, "to-night the noble has said that he will carry out his vow to wed my dear young lady. I know this is true, for I have been up to the chapel, and I have with these eyes seen all the preparations for a wedding, less the crowded chancel and the choristers in sight, the parents to give away the bride, and the bridegroom's friends to support him in his pledge. My darling, though it is under the mantelpiece, as they say, will still be this gentleman's wife. What matters that good reasons compel them to be united thus secretly? The State is a terrible tyrant when it is in the shape of Henry the burly and bluff! I do not marvel that this noble, probably under his disfavor, weds and will not parade his wife, worthy of the court though she be, until the next monarch makes all England glad! Wed! Catherine will be nobly wed, and the saying will be made true! I am content."

Forming a wreath of the roses, white and red, she resumed singing in her old voice, very gay now:

“The Laird of Turreffash would
 Do wrang to Sir John Dashwood,
 By lifting of his flocks!
 Hame drove, an’ to his damage,
 No mutton for his homage,
 An’ lost ten o’ his jocks!”

She went, still droning the refrain of her ballad, within the cottage.

The interior was as great a surprise as had been that of the barge. The rustic furniture of the cottage had been removed and in its stead was that from the castle. Luckily, what was portable had been brought. So the rich fittings and luxurious seats and decorations made the place a boudoir meet for even the lovely Catherine.

Like her maid, she wore an air of a pleasedness not seen in her former quarters. She was attired in fine stuffs, and her hair had been done up with her own hands after a block print of one of the foreign princesses, which the chapman had brought to the cottages.

Dame Kennedy placed the roses in a basin, and prepared to form a string of them together with the wreath, to deck the midnight bride.

“It will be to-night!” said she, as if doubting her great fortune.

“He is a noble and will keep all his promises. I told you so from the outset!”

“He was not sure, he said, last night!”

“Not sure! A lover is never sure! His ‘mayhap’ means ‘I’ll try,’ and what is impossible to a lover? This is a lover who truly loves.”

“You believe he is noble?”

"I am not inclined to be too inquisitive until all is secure—I mean until you are his wedded wife. But I use my eyes and listen, and this house and grounds are vast. The building covers three acres! If the mansion of his friend, what must his rank be?"

"Yes, and his presents!"

She opened a drawer in a magnificent toilet table of Oriental cabinet-work, encrusted with what were gems in those days, and took out string after string of pearls, clusters of diamonds and bracelets of gold, the workmanship costly; there was enough to garnish the queen's ladies at a state ball.

Catherine handled them as if already accustomed to such trinkets.

"Do you think that he loves me?"

"Lady, if you go into a church and see the shrines and the presiding statue in each, how can you tell which rates the highest in the devotions of the worshipers?"

"I should on the face of it say that the shrine where the most candles burn and the effigy is most profusely arrayed!"

"By the gifts of your worshiper value his admiration."

"His admiration, yes—but his love!"

"He is going to wed you—that fixes the seal on his love!"

"Why does he keep secrets from me? How do I know what his rank is, if he has rank! how his title when he is plain Ethelwolf to me! what his name when he presses

that he should be wedded under that bare Christian mark?"

"Bah! after marriage he will be frank! Marry the man first, and he will be yours to the last—in the interval you will learn all that is good to know! For years, my man was plain Nick to me. I little cared if he were a Roby or a Ducie, which they all were in my vale! Give him all the love you have, all the little knowledge you have of your degree, and all the hopes of what you yearned to be! Do not say to him, though he does so to you: 'So few hours to you and so many to the unknown rival!'"

"A rival! I brook no rival!"

"Pho! he is a statesman and must busy himself with the king's business!"

"Too young!"

"A young head, but on old shoulders! Brave, for he crosses the deer park without laying his hand on his sword—the bucks look at him, catch his eye, and let him wend his way! Cool, for he says that, on the night when he saw you first, he dashed toward you through the worst high wind known for a lifetime on the Thames! Loving, for his eyes are full of you. When he has me by, he speaks of nothing but you—how you can be happy forevermore! Oh, he loves you—or I never did! I could die for him, because he is going to make a wife of you without asking more of your origin than I can allow myself to give—perhaps, after marriage, he said, I may be more clear!"

"But when I implored him to be frank, he said, 'Not

now! anon!' I am sickened as one is with the rooks quarreling, with his 'Anon!' All I say to him falls and sinks in that fathomless pit of 'Hereafter!'"

"But you will be his lady-wife to-morrow! There is no hereafter to wedded lovers—it is all one even mead, spangled with flowers!"

"They have thorns!"

"You will learn all that it is wise for you to know! His is not a close mouth!"

"But it is. When I ask him if it is not another who detains him, making me wait so long for his visits, he smiles grimly and as if apprehensive—yes, there is some one who steals away my time! whom he runs away from to give me a few moments!"

"You are too grasping yourself. But never fear—after wedlock the other will lose her hold—I am not so sure it is not a him! I hear, in the ballads, of friends who cling to their fellows like lover to his mate! I cannot pronounce their names—they are very old—what time the fort out there was reared to beat off the savages who dressed, God save the mark! in blue dye! But they must be known to you who have read everything in print you could devour!"

"Yes, there are noted pairs of friends in antiquity," murmured Catherine, ready to be persuaded out of her jealousy. "But I should not permit Ethelwolf to go away from me to hunt with his Nisus." She stamped her foot, clad in a velvet slipper embroidered with pearls. "At least this Nisus is free to rove in the woodland while I am as a captive of the heathen Turk again!"

“Wait—to-morrow it will be your Ethelwolf who will be your captive! You shall lead him in a silken thread, like the woman who has Hercules by the nose in the tapestry there!”

After a pause, during which she had rapaciously chosen among the jewels as a queen for her coronation rather than a maid for her wedding, Catherine spoke.

“Do you think that, after the nuptials, he will take me out of this lodging, which is not preferable to our old barge?”

“Certainly—no lover likes to hide his prize in a bushel. It were wise to do so, but who expects wisdom in a lover—in a newly-married man?” said the old woman, knowingly. “He will take you to town, be shrew me else!”

“To London! Then I might with a light hand help you, and my tiring women, to adorn me as I have but half a heart to do now!”

With Kennedy’s aid, no more experienced than herself to pin, clasp and spring, she proceeded to don the ornaments which her veil was to cover without concealing.

Soon they glittered on brow, neck, bosom and even around her wrists.

“How dazzling! how splendid you are! how happy you must be!”

“Yes, dame, I am happy now on the eve—only—only it is a pity that there will be nobody there in the chapel to see me in this glory!”

“Ah! she wishes to delight more than her husband! It is a bad sign!” muttered poor Kennedy.

Catherine trod the room. The sunshine failing did not

content her. She made an imperious gesture and the old woman proceeded to obey her. She lighted a lamp and several candles. Her ward strutted up and down in the limited space, turning her head to see the gems glitter and the sheen of her silk dress with its semi-train.

Suddenly her smile was dulled.

“What a paltry marriage for a noble’s wife!” said she, “I ought to have pages to carry my train! I ought to have the church—nay, a cathedral filled with spectators, and they noble, great, and proud! The hall should glow with luster! so as to pale everything by my girdle of fire!”

She went up to the mirror, not glass, but a sheet of silvery metal highly burnished. She admired herself with turns of the graceful neck, like a swan coquetting.

“Let your gallant come now!” exclaimed Kennedy, enthusiastically; “this display is worthy of a queen, and you are worthy of this queenly display!”

CHAPTER IV.

WHERE EARL DEREHAM WAS EXPECTED ON HIS WEDDING
MORN.

The palace hall of reception at York-place, called Whitehall in time, was thronged with the officials bound to be in attendance when the monarch, like Henry, prided himself on the parade of state ceremonials. This throng was augmented by the privileged, who had heard that matters of unprecedented importance were to be enacted.

Rumor had it that the king's emissaries, he having maintained the staff of secret intelligences set up by Cardinal Wolsey, had never been more busy or widely disseminated. The absence, otherwise unaccountable, of the royal favorite, Earl Dereham, were laid to the emergencies of state, there being trouble from the north, backed by Scottish fomentation, as well as some ugly bruits brought on the winds over from the main.

The officers attended not only in full attire but with the insignia of their posts. The lord great chancellor had his pages with the sword of state, and the knights of the orders of the Bath and Garter, and the foreigners entitled to wear the emblems of the noted alien recognizances, as the Fleece, the St. This or St. That, also were in their places, conversing decorously.

Around the keeper of the seals flocked the grandees; such dukes as Norfolk, being the lieutenant-general of the

kingdom, who inquired particularly as to the sovereign's health. It was replied that the health was excellent if his majesty was not so harrassed by the cares of his country.

But he had risen briskly, though betimes, for the second Tudor, finding it more onerous to sustain a dynasty than to found it, began to cultivate his bed of down. Not to lose time, he had called the chancellor into his "state bed," that is his easy-chair by the alcove for rest.

"There has been no change in the usual ceremony about the king's rising?" asked Norfolk, who was punctilious.

"None at all," was the reply of the marshal of ceremony. "It is precisely as established from man's mind in our forefather's time!"

"Glad am I to hear that. I am not overfond of innovations, especially French ones, and yet I have feared, since the merry meeting of our king and France's, that we should be outdone by outlandish caprices!"

The chamberlain turned to instruct some new officers, and the duke brushed aside the tedium threatening him, as he was not to find many of his equals at hearing, to accost a prelate who entered under much obeisance.

It was Thomas Cranmer, primate of all England, the English pope and his legatee in one. He had a troubled brow despite his self-government, for he must have had no good news from Rome, and instead of alluding to this subject, a home one for him, he listened greedily to some comments on the news, or rather the lack of news, out of the far north.

"In truth, we are at loggerheads with the King of the

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Scots," bluntly said Norfolk, drawing his conclusions from the chatter, "as inveterately as the Archangel Michael, there, with Prince Satan, on the arras."

There was something hurtling in the north wind. King Henry had returned from York in a fury. He had gone there mainly to meet King James, and the expectation had been fanned for a week before it was blown out. There might be many and fine excuses for the slight, but inefficient; for the monarch, disappointed and insulted, had been attacked with something like gout flying to the head.

"Provoking," said the archbishop, like one who wished to neutralize one acid by another. "The tidings out of Italy are not kinder!"

"You would not say that the king has been excommunicated again?" sneered Norfolk; "like the eels, he will get used to this kind of ecclesiastical flaying!"

"This time, I think, it is the realm will be under the lash!"

"Bah, it is a broad platter, our England, and we could roast a bull on it, like a carbonated steak!"

"Ah, but the people will be pronounced unworthy of holy offices in their doings and goings!"

"Will they get out the great galleys of Tuscany and tow our ancient isle over to the Bay of Naples to be dealt with, as a pig found cutting his throat in the spring overflows?" continued the old noble, bantering.

"Your grace, were you not at the meeting yesterday——"

"Of what? I had some friends to dine!"

"No, the great meeting of stiff-necks, the nobles, the recalcitrant clergy, the—chafers at the yoke, as they say——"

"When was this?"

"Yesterday. I have the list of over twenty prelates and half that number of learned and religious doctors, who set down their adherence in formal writing——"

"Writing! but, perhaps, that is the way to fight seals and bulls!"

"It is the declaration that they and their followers finally reject the Roman domination!"

"Ho, ho! your shepherds are proof to the correction of your crook, eh! You must take them by the hindleg with the hook and throw them downstairs!"

"They would drag me with them by the sheer weight! I must approve of their rebellion, which is a purely moral one!"

"The poor Pope left us nothing—what do these pure moralists leave him?"

"A title—he is now, by their leave, Bishop of Rome!"

"Rome is a world in itself, but not the world! This is pruning the states of the Church! Well, are we to flop about like a beheaded fowl, without our natural cap?"

Cranmer smiled suavely.

"No, since the same league of malcontents transfer their allegiance. They crave for a head, and beg the king to assume the leadership. The Defender of the Faith becomes its mender."

"Let it rest there!"

"Ah, my lord, but it will not rest at that. There are

restless souls who will stir up that cistern of turbulence and turpidity, religious difficulties."

Norfolk shook his head.

"When her sword is thrust in cold water, all cools down to the water. Little danger! The English people have passed through the waters and are on the other shore. This time, the English will fight the French with more vehemence than their brothers between Tweed and the ocean. The Jove on the Seven Hills may fling his bolts, but they will fall short, say, into the Channel. They will hiss and fume, but they will be quenched."

"Some of the sparks will scatter and light pyres here."

"Forefend it, God! for all our sakes—man may light a fire, but whom it shall burn is beyond our ken!"

Cranmer almost laughed at the word, but he remembered it later—when he burned at the stake.

"We light no fire but for the Welsh to toast their cheese, Englishmen to warm their possets, and the Scotch to boil their stolen mutton over!"

"It is because of this religious division that the Scotch will be able to enter the kingdom."

"Not far, not deep, my lord!"

"You are a soldier and do not look beyond your outposts!"

"You are a gownsman and do not look outside of the convent walls! Now I conjecture that this Jamie o' the North has had hold of the arm attached to that hand which signed the papal excommunication!"

"It is a far cry from Arthur's seat to the papal chair!"

"The monasteries are echoing ears all the day. And the hand of King James' rebuff is at the end of the pontiff's arm! The holy father thus finds the mailed hand to grasp the sword of St. Peter. When James wedded with the Princess Mary of Guise, the papal blessing carried with it his bribe for him to make war on us."

While thus speaking the two had paced up and down, everybody making way for them. Thus they came over to the doorway of the royal apartments. Stopping at the sound of the king's voice, they perceived it was warm with wrath, though the words were not intelligible through the panels and the hangings.

Several pages at side entrances suddenly drew aside the hangings and hung them up on great iron hooks for the purpose. Out of this pranced a young man, lightly and extravagantly appareled in a style not seen elsewhere in the hall. He bowed the way in of a lady in court attire, for whom all suspended conversation and saluted lowly.

It was the Princess Margaret, sister of the ruler.

She wore rather a sad expression, and the resigned air of one compelled for state reasons to keep her feelings in control under the various scandalous acts of her brother.

Her gallant was the newly-elected Duke of Sussex, coming to see the lady of the court as his first duty on his return out of France. Hastily saluting those gentlemen who bowed, he went on with the frivolous gossip with which he had been entertaining, or at least diverting, the sedate lady in her rooms.

“Did I see there the Duchess of Etampes—that Diana whose like was not since the one who slid down the moon-beam balustrade like a tomboy to kiss the shepherd Endymion? Not to see her was to pass my time in an eclipse. Yes, of a verity I saw and admired that incomparable divinity! One had need be a salamander to meet the scorching rays of her full eyes! Often did I see her, but the first time, I remember me, that she wore a robe of a hue every like your grace’s, though more in cut than in hue, which was a favorite one of King Francis’.”

Norfolk frowned and remarked to his gentleman in waiting:

“Wrockwarden, is this one of England’s knights, so changed by a draft of French wine as to chatter on the outbreak of war with our ancient foe, of bows of ribbon?”

“You have a sound memory, my lord!” replied the princess in the guarded tone which left a doubt whether she spoke jestingly or not, “and we will request your gracious brother to appoint you grand master of the Milanery!”

There was a little titter, for the gibe was not ill, for a princess, at a time when princesses were both pert and literary, since the word “Milanery,” at first applied to steel work, notably armor, for which the Milan smiths were famed, was becoming altered to include the cutters and fashioners of dress for the less martial and for women.

“The material of this self-same robe did come from over-the-sea. The mills of Lyons supplied it to the French king, who included a roll of it among other high-

prized presents, in token of his eternal esteem of his brother sovereign."

The princess made a grand reverence to the Duke of Norfolk, and even a more dignified one to the archbishop. Sussex was not to be subdued; he advanced to salute them both, but quickly and even flippantly. Respect was diminishing in this generation. Henry had proven too effectually that bishops and dukes were things that might be stripped of their drapery and let into prison or upon the scaffold like ordinary nobles.

"Alack!" interrupted the young peer. "Expect no more dresses or tokens of amity. The next thing will be gloves!"

"Gloves, your grace?"

"Gloves, not for your hand! gloves, plated with steel and shaped to hold lance and sword. The gantlet of war's defiance!"

"Norfolk turned swiftly upon him.

"Tokens of defiance? Enmity, there, too?"

"My grave lord, I am sorry to say that in bidding farewell to the Princess of Guise and Montmorency, they more than hinted that the much-trumpeted Franco-Anglican alliance was not long to endure!"

Courtiers flocked around this group, as close as respect for the princess and the primate would excuse.

"Have you embroiled us with those grave lords, earl?" the duke asked the other with much vivacity.

"I? Not I! But the English in France have been doing all they could to enflame the genial, lightsome French with the old hate. There is still cherished against

us a grudge for "the Battle of the Spurs," and as long as King Henry maintains a stretch of French territory, as at Calais, so long will they wish it is but to have a foothold after landing to recover his army from the evil-of-the-sea before they have the tug for its possession renewed."

"Oh! they seek that pitch still," said the archbishop, soothingly; "would that you had sounded the financier of the kingdom as to the amount they would pay for his redemption."

"Sell for gold what our blood bought!" cried more than one voice.

"Why not, when we need the money to fight," said Sussex, with unexpected fire.

"Ay," said Norfolk, gravely, yet with some emotion. "War with Rome and her allied; war with Scotland; war with France! See you this, Sir Thomas? Even this mincing gallant longs to cover his silk with steel plate and exchange his gilded cane for a spear. You will see him on a warhorse sooner than the horse-litter which, I hear, his companions would initiate here after a German model! You followers of peace bring up our young on pap, but you forget the savor it gets from the iron pot; and they cry for blood when they come of man's age!"

"My lord is right," said Sussex, smiling; "we youth are like the fencing-master's pupils, who, long kept back by the master's superior prowess, finally learns all his tricks, and being taunted to thrust, by George! attack so savagely that they transfix him! We have in sport so often fenced with Scot, Gaul and Spaniard that now that we

mean to spar in earnest, there will be death carried on the point! As a man waylaid by desperadoes finds victory in the confusion of all setting upon him in one rush, so that they postle, one the others, and all each one, so say I, 'Have at us! we shall cope with all of you at once!'

Norfolk was not at all ill pleased at this patriotic outburst which the younger nobles would have violently applauded but for etiquette. But he had conceived a dislike for this man with his dainty gait and novel apparel, and he grumbled while secretly approving.

"Young cousin," said he, biting his gray mustache, "it is a pity that I should be forced to believe that our dread lord has too much work cut out and on hand which will stay him from taking up your well-digested and all-comprising counsel, political views and precipitous projects!"

"At least, my good lord, they are backed up by my own person; it is not all the lords in council who, approving of war, buckle on their armor and swords for the battles they bring on us!"

The younger man's cheeks were burning, and his eyes blazed. He felt that he had gone beyond any rights in replying to the elder's rebuke, and he knew clearly that the princess, brought up with rigid deference to the aged, would not commend his action. She had pretended not to hear the wrangle.

The old peer looked out of the window and assumed a humorous expression.

"I see nothing in the air to stay the lords of Guise and

Montmorency, with their friends and kin, to boot, crossing the straits and of their own accord."

"To fight English gentlemen on their own soil!" said the youthful earl, nodding.

"Well, they need but coast along to the border-line, wherein they can grind their famous blades on Scotch gritstone. I warrant that there are hot bloods at King James' Court who would turn the whetting-wheel!"

"Oh, in Scotland!"

The courtiers brought their heads together and whispered. Certainly, there would be war with Scotland, and the French would be the allies there.

"You need not send the course of the coasting to the French spitfires. They will betake themselves thither, particularly since the Guises and the Stuarts are bound by wedlock. As I do not doubt that your lordship will be numbered among the leaders of our forces, which I trust to conduct northerly, it will furnish a fine opportunity for you to renew acquaintance with the foreign jacks! Say, on Tweed bank—as firm fighting ground as the Seine!"

"Things will turn out just as you surmise, my grave lord—if the king's orders do not alter them. In my country there is a mossgrown saw, to wit: 'If a man sees two swordblades ashine in the sun, you need but look toward the duke to see that his scabbard is empty!'"

The princess smiled at this and clapped her hand with one long glove, which she had drawn off, yet looked aside as if not pointedly indorsing the implied self-congratulation.

"It is, in faith, an old, old saying," interposed Cranmer, who seemed not averse to adding fuel to the flame, "but so old that it appeared fallen into disuse!"

"It would have revived, my revered master," said the youth, "if I had been home when that unhappy Queen Ann Bullen was tried."

There was a tremor running through the circles of listeners. On stepping off French ground the gallant had trodden upon that more volcanic.

"And perchance it would have been better if I had been here, then, not for mine honor's sake—for that does not need fresh gilding—but for your highness' and your grace's, and, eke, all those who let that stain of guileless blood befoul your mantles!"

The judges of the short-lived queen shook at this unprecedented rebuke at the doors of the royal Bluebeard.

"If I follow your lordship closely," said Herbert of Pembroke, who had dissented against the judgment on the unfortunate consort, "you imply that you would, being on the spot, have defended the lady?"

"Yes, and in two ways!"

"One would have been enough to cost you your liberty," said Somers, the jester, "and two—God wot! they would have imperiled your life!"

"May one hear them?" asked one of those courtiers who sought to involve everybody but himself in the royal jealousy to "thin out the danglers."

"Why not?" continued the young peer, not requiring urging. "In the house of my peers, with my speech!"

"But if the king hushed your speech, as mine!" suggested some dependent of the Bullens.

"Then, in the field of honor, with my sword!"

In the silence, vibrating in all breasts, the princess alone took it upon her to speak.

"My lord, my lord, you forget," said she, with quavering accents, for she felt for the loose-tongued but valorous knight, "you are upbraiding your sovereign—and before his sister!"

"Cry you pardon, lady!" said Sussex, not a whit abashed. "But I noticed your highness was so detached from worldly matters that I could not imagine the sound of my voice, and no more the purport of my speech, should tingle in your ear."

This was barbing the arrow. There was a rumor that, feeling a passion impossible to realize, the lady looked toward the convent for repose, and this blame became personal.

But she was quite capable of fighting her own battles. She looked all around to signify with the glance that she begged for no champion. She used a plain, leisurely modulated voice which carried conviction.

"Sussex," said she, "since Heaven has given my brother the blessing of a son and heir to the glorious throne of our sires, and I laid aside all expectation of being successor to the crown, there went with my dues all desire to be consulted in matters of peace, war and politics. Believe, then, that had this been otherwise, I should have listened with the proper interest to the warlike debate between you and the gentlemen."

In this reproaching him in her apology, she returned the question upon the general ground and thrust the Bullen interlude out of the scene.

"Alack, lady!" returned the irrepressible hornet, who seemed bent on venting on her the spite of some censure previous to this time; "if the words I uttered had come from another mouth, which I need not fit the name to——"

She started and lifted her large fan before her twitching features.

"Your highness would at present be a rebel!"

Few fully understood this quip. What the irritating young noble was aiming at none could guess—for the princess was amiable and had no foes.

It would appear that Sussex had left the court, not to see her, since he might love her without hope, but that on his return he had discovered that he had a rival with stronger support.

"A rebel?"

"A rebel, for I really believe your highness would have gone on learning warfare and politics under able tuition, as if her nephew, our dear Prince Edward, did not exist!"

Again no one checked this remarkable attack.

"My Lord of Sussex," said she, "I know not if King Francis' sister permits his peers to pass such remarks in her presence, but I do know right well that if they are repeated in the hearing of our King Henry's sister, she will be obliged to appeal to the King of England!"

The silence had become burdensome; token of a gath-

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ering storm. Somers, the fool, had retired into a recess. Sussex received signals from his friends, though his arrogance and foppishness had lessened their number; carping at a princess for jilting him was one thing, but it was worse to hint at the more successful wooer. Who was this? a hundred eyes questioned; but as there was no answer, it seemed providential that the ushers at the door and all along the passage to the hall, should repeat in their clear voices:

“Room! room! way for his grace, the Earl of Dereham!”

CHAPTER V.

SHOWING IN WHAT ARRAY THE SCOTS CAME TO ADDRESS THE KING OF ENGLAND.

Ethelwolf, Earl of Dereham, entered with a train like a royal prince. But though his suite were clad in glittering and highly colored costumes, it was their chief who was merely foiled by their attire.

Overnight, we know, he was to marry the lone captive of the stranded barge—consequently he was in his wedding suit.

As the military officials of the household—officers of the sword—still wore armor as proof of their posts, this daintiness was conspicuous. Save young lords who had traveled—like Sussex—the tone was sober, though the material was rich. This beginning to dispense even with body armor had led to Dereham replying that he cast off his iron to fight the more freely—not to flee.

In the hall he had handed to a page his cap, adorned with long plumes of rare birds, and his cloak, laced with rows of gilt tinsel, and buttoned with chiseled gold knobs and the claps jeweled.

So his fair head stood out over a sea of billowy lace, fine as the Princess Margaret was wearing, and as profuse. His doublet sat close and showed a peerless figure, enhanced and made pliable by no stint of manly exercises. His nervous limbs were shaped out in roseate hose of

wool, almost resembling silk; and his shoes were loaded, as the fashion was, since the king's feet were clumsy, with the Tudor rose, enormous, and set with a costly ruby in the midst. On his left breast, screwed with a pin tipped with a crystal, bloomed a large fresh rose.

It was Catherine's decoration.

Everybody scanned this joyous figure with different emotions.

One studies the king's favorite to pry out the secret of his fascination.

Some said that Fleming, whose pupil Ethelwolf was known to be, had the monarch set toward him by spells and potions. Others resented that Henry should hang round this young noble's neck—like a necklace—and hoped it would be the fatal halter some early day.

Margaret gave him one quick glance and dared no more, lest she betrayed what was not a close secret now.

It was acknowledged that, if the policy of seeking a husband for a princess of the English house royal, for fear of exciting home feuds, was to be broken, she might not be blamed for a derogatory mate if she wedded with Dereham.

The flower on his breast might signify that he wore her color and her brand, since it might pass for the Tudor rose, and she colored a little and plied her fan.

Dereham was greeted by a hundred who could get near him.

This lateness of his to pay his morning duty to the king argued that he had no fear of his favor faltering.

On all sides, though, were heard regrets that he was belated.

"Nay, nay," said Sussex, with his pushing forward, this time goaded by seeing a rival to his flame. "You are most timely, lord of all hearts!"

The young nobles faced, and many thought that seldom had they seen a comelier pair or one more worthy of their high strains.

"Timely!"

All listened, for it looked as if the returner from the foreign strand would have a quarrel on his hands before nightfall.

"Yes, to plead a cause in my favor, nearly lost at her highness' special court——"

Ethelwolf did not seem to like this being kept beside the princess, from whom he was turning after a ceremonial salutation.

"My lord, you meet me most untimely, for I hurried to crave pardon for my lateness. I may, however, arrive too late to properly present my greeting to her highness, but I am far too late, with other affairs in abeyance, to place my services at your grace's command—whom I am glad to see home again to take a place in the council!"

"And the field!" added the peer, quickly.

"Sometimes," said Margaret, with a little bitterness, "it is easier to forgive the absent than the present. For absence only entails one reproach—that of forgetfulness!"

She could not keep some pain and vexation out of her speech.

Dereham was young for his place, but he had learned the art to deceive that one may delight.

"You know how unjust that would be to befall me, lady," said he, with smooth tongue, under his smooth face. "No, I was at the palace at a good hour, but I was detained there by a tremendous concourse, and the barriers put up to restrain the London mob flocking to glower at the Scottish envoys and their guards, all reeking of the heather and the ice-brook! The people cheer them as they would any wild beast!" he concluded, with drollery.

"What, have we the kerns here?" cried the Duke of Norfolk, quickly, going to the window and drawing the curtain aside to peer upon the north road.

"They are asking for admission in their own way."

Indeed, all conversation was suspended because of a hideous and stupendous clamor. There was laughter, cheers, and wild shouting. Norfolk and others at the windows saw odd pennons wave, and long poles topped with uncouth axes brandished, while caps plumed with wild birds' feathers were put on the points of heavy blades. Then was heard the English turning-out signal for the guards—drum and fife. Suddenly blared a strange and poignant, deafening and yet harrying sound, more noise than music.

The courtiers blanched and trembled.

"Barbaric!" said young Sussex, "it is the war horns of the Scythians spoken of, saith my tutor, by Thucydides!"

Norfolk turned round in the embrasure, and, holding

up his hand for a hearing, and taking advantage of a lull, explained with a solemn face:

"It is the slogan—the war song of the border clans—that is the McClennan's pibroch!"

Sussex turned to Margaret.

"The compliment your highness made me whilom should be rehearsed to our high constable, for he has a better memory, I do not doubt, than poor me!"

"Memory?" returned Norfolk, coming into the hall as if to break away from the savage melody. "Young knight, believe an old warsman. When you shall have heard only once that eerie battle call on the clashing field, and that devils' bagpipe skirl over the dying, you will forever mind it, and its echo will go down in your halls from father to son and from mother to daughter. And more than once you will rise up of a sudden in the dead of the night, driven by it out of your dreams!"

A shudder ran through the audience, for it was not a slight thing that would make the fire-tempered marshal of England blanch and wince. Margaret beckoned openly to Dereham to come near her, as if she wished a shield against the impression pervading her, and making her heart chill after throbbing too impetuously.

He was holding out his arm to her with courtesy, but assuredly no other feeling, though Sussex chose to see in it a deeper meaning, when of a sudden the door near them flew open before a vigorous thrust. The two folds unfolding showed on the sill the figure of King Henry.

It was not given to many men to witness that bulk of man and monarchy in a passion. His broad face was red

to the ears; his eyes were beginning to seem inset in depressions of fat, but they were distended and emitted sparks of light; his vast frame, wide of shoulder and hip, and set on great limbs and substantial feet, quaked with indignation.

In a lusty voice, compatible with his formidable aspect, he thundered, like an aroused lion silencing all the denizens of the forest:

"Now, by my holy dame! do you hear that? as I did, gentlemen? or is it a daydream after too heavy a gorged banquet! Can it be—no, it cannot be that the pipes of Scotland squeak in our palace courtyard!"

The courtiers shrank, as if each were to blame. With his impetuosity and lack of reverence, Sussex again forestalled others.

"A fig, to choke the mouthpiece!" cried he. "Sire, full oft have they heard the English bugle-horn in Stirling Castle-yard!"

Henry looked at him, recognizing, but not calm enough to grin his approval. Presently he wiped his forehead with a kerchief, which he flung to a page.

"You are right, boy!" said he, nodding genially to the pert speaker. "It seems time you all rallied around our standard-guard." He listened. There was silence without. "But our horns," he went on in a lowered tone, "did not spout such fiendish wailings—enow to startle the cold dead from their graves!"

The whole palace had been turned out by the unusual piping. Several old servants and ladies burst in at side doors. Out of an unsuspected secret panel appeared the

white head and sturdy old form of the companion of Dereham on the mystic night, and who had been brought to the healing of Catherine.

Henry the king looked at him with amusement and sympathy.

The necromancer held in one hand a phial, in the mouth of which was stuck a glass filter with a bulb. In the other was a leaf of parchment of which he was following the prescript when drawn out of his study.

“Ha, look at our old seeker of truth! Cheer, Fleming! he comes hasting from his laboratory, bedewed as by the hot waters of Bath, believing no longer in his devil having power to shield him—thinking the shrilling was from the last trump!”

Perceiving that his fright had driven him into view of the Court, Fleming cowered back to the tapestry.

“Begone into your den, master!” continued the king. “It is nothing! *Compos sui!*” said he, laughing as he aired his Latin. “Be master of yourself! that is just the Scotch idea of a welcoming chant! the yelp of the Highland sheep-cur trying to emulate the roar of the lion of England!”

Fleming made a short and hurried bow, with his eyes blinking, and disappeared by the hidden outlet, where the panel slid behind him as if pulled by invisible spirits.

The king turned to Norfolk, who stood at attention as though awaiting orders.

“Constable, go superintend the letting in of those border cattle drovers, and on the way, ask our trumpeters if

they have forgotten the blast they blew in the great, last charge of Flodden-field !”

He showed his teeth, strong, short and ground with voracious eating as he uttered the final words.

Henry proceeded with a measured step to the chair at the throne site. He saluted his sister with much grace, that chivalric deference and recognition of women which gave him much advance in winning their kindness. He bowed to the whole assemblage, and to those he passed closely, he said in a low voice, full of ominous merriment :

“ ’Tis the watch horn, which denotes that it is our neighbor’s palace, not ours, that is food for the burning.”

Two or three courtiers slipped out and climbed by connivance of the servants to the roof of the east turret. There, presently, several of the carrier pigeons, to keep which has always been the cockney weakness, hastily were thrust out of their coops. They each bore messages rolled up in a quill and firmly attached. The tenor of all was similar :

“War with Scotland! Rely on this!”

The pigeon, it appears, was the flying newsman of that reign.

Henry scrutinized the gathering. All faces, recovering from the gruesome surprise of the bagpipes, were ruffled, but soon came the composure of men eager for action under the monarch’s direction. All remembered that he was the general who had beaten the French at Guinegate.

He beckoned to Dereham, while fifty others were waiting to be called beside him.

"Wolf," said he, tenderly, for he loved this young man, "do not hang back from drawing nigh, for this ground is still certain—the throne is not to be shaken by the blast of a pipe in a sack! I stood against the Bretons called to advance by their bagpipes! These other sections cannot prevail against a fort upheld on one side by nobility as fervent, stout and dreading naught, as you——"

He left one hand on his favorite's shoulder, and taking the archbishop's hand, said with ripe art:

"And secured by Mother Church!"

He seemed engrossed in this appeal to peers and bishops—but he saw every movement in the throng. He saw, therefore, as if she was averse even to her brother depriving her of Dereham's company, that the princess was withdrawing.

"Where are you going, Madge?" said he, cordially.

"Sire, I came to wish you good-day, and not to receive these Norsemen! If this be their music, God save me from their voices! I hope that you will take it that my place is not at a council of war!"

He stopped her retreat with a gesture.

"Your birth should set you more oft at the council-board than on the ballroom floor!" said he, curtly, but still with the affection in which he held her. "You are forgetful that, in England, land of chivalry and gallantry, without hyprocrisy, women may rule, and that if evil should accrue to Prince Edward——"

"Which Heaven forfend!" interrupted Cranmer, always seizing an opening to ingratiate himself.

"Ay, God preserve us all from disaster of any kind!" said she, forcibly.

She had never coveted cares of state. Repeating her courtesy, accepting the silence as approval of her Tudor-esque stubbornness, she continued her departure, escorted by Sussex, who profited by Dereham being beside the king; but the young noble returned from her suite doors.

"Where is Will?" asked the king, looking around. "Where is my Momus, Will?"

"Your merryman," replied Dereham, quietly, "lost his appetite for the morning cake on hearing that rude breakfast horn!"

With the princess, all the ladies had gone out. The men drew themselves up erect, and even the pages assumed martial airs, or, at all events, saucy ones, their hands on the waist or resting on their jeweled daggers in the glittering sheaths; their caps set jauntily on their curls or long locks.

The guards held their partisans as if they were oak and iron, like them; the other soldiers resembled high-reliefs jutting forth from the walls. The nobles clustered around the throne where Dereham by his youth contrasted with the veterans of the French and English strife, and also of repelling raids of the Scotch.

Presently, when the tension of waiting was hard-drawn, was heard the tolerably regular march of men weighty by their weapons and armor, wearing buskins of goat rawhide, and slightly stumbling on unknown marble and polished oaken floors. This march was up

the grand staircase, and between lines of soldiers and palace servants.

The bagpipes and the hoarse chorus had not been heard after the shrill and clear blasts of the clarion at the gateway. But the tramp was as impressive as all that in-harmonious, strident clangor.

The monarch stood out a little on the platform, from his chair, the same which was re-seated with the stone of Scone, formerly belonging to the kings of Scotland and attached by ancient rites to their coronation forms. At the back of this chair, encircled in the blue ribbon, were the armorial bearings of England—the lions with the French lily-flowers.

The king-at-arms, as the lord chamberlain challenged the newcomers at the main doorway, signaled to his own heralds to blow a welcoming blast, on silver trumpets.

The Scottish delegation comprised famed nobles and warriors, but with appreciation of his renown among the English, the chief was Sir John Thirlstane, lord lieutenant of the marches, a grizzled veteran, sheathed in complete steel. Only, instead of the breastplate for a mounted man, he wore a surcoat of fine steel chain over his midst, girdled by the belt of the Knights of St. Andrews, the cross in beaten silver spotting the blue steel at regular spaces. He had a heavy sword at his side, with a massive gold hilt; and he carried a steel rod, almost like a walking-stave, except that its peak was furnished with a small ax and a hook. This instrument, used to enable a member of a storming party to climb up a wall,

signified that the war which he was prepared to announce would be to the heart of the city, after having been merciless on the country.

His helmet, too, unsuited the plate armor, had no visor, but exposed his stern visage, with a nose scarred and a short beard and mustache, cropped so as not to be chafed by the neckpiece of chain-mail closely enwrapping his nape and throat.

He bore this load of iron as if it were the fine silk of Dereham's gay bridal suit.

Sir John, "the Harrier of the Border," was half a head taller than his surrounders, though they were men of brawn and substance. Used to deer hunting and following the eagle to its crags, they were spare in flesh. Their dress was quaint and barbaric. Some had bare legs and arms of savages; these wore boiled leather caps, plated rudely with brass and copper, riveted on; others had wool caps and bonnets, the ancient buckles and clasps of bronze, perhaps coeval with the Danish invasions, holding plumes cut of rare and high-flying birds. They were of both the black and the red northern races, some having flowing hair and beards so long that they were braided and tied up like horses' manes. Their equipment was non-uniform and every head had its distinction thus; helms and casques—some taken in battle in the lowlands, no doubt; the Templars' flat iron pots, the crested and the pointed, the rounded and the spiked. Some of their retainers carried spears adorned with horn, jaw, and beak of indescribable animals, like the North American Indians' totem.

Standing before the gilded and highly-tinted tapestry, with gaudy courtiers flanking them, they displayed not the slightest curiosity, being controlled by unweakening wills.

"Vandals and Goths!" muttered the lord chamberlain, as, his duty performed, he fell back, with the king-at-arms.

"Yes, but, luckily, we have a dictator who will save Rome!" said Norroy.

"And extend her borders!" added Dereham, who overheard.

So did the king, for he darted a rapid look of thanks toward his flatterer.

Sir John Thirlstane, envoy of King James of Scotland, was allowed to approach his dread majesty of England.

Henry looked full at the representative after a lingering glance at the only object common to his supporters—the famous claymore. This national weapon was a double-edged sword-blade of some forty odd inches long by two wide, densely hammered forging, and weighing six or seven pounds. The handle was long, to permit the use of two hands for a finishing stroke.

Thirlstane's page bore his siege-shield, a mantelet with a sea-bird "displayed," supposed never to rest, but remain on the wing, with the motto, "Ready and steady!"

"We greet you, Sir John! we acknowledge you worthy to-day of your olden and never-belied device!"

The Scot, for he was by name and lineage truly Scotch, bowed.

"I am proud," returned he, his voice martially in uni-

son with the clank and jingle of his mail, having a metallic ring, too—"I am proud to bear it when, as now, my prince's and my native land's honor are at stake, and my ambition is to act up to it."

"We know you, loyal and intrepid servitor, and the selection of the messenger is as agreeable as, we trust, the nature of the message. Who is to doubt that my nephew is to fulfill the claims imposed on him? and it is to give the greatest publicity to his submission that—in lieu of meeting his liege at York, where I waited a whole week for him"—went on the king with emphasis, while he could not prevent a frown—"to debate in a close room, the political and religious conditions of our two realms, he sends an ambassador who deserves this very public hearing——"

"Sire, my king's instructions are plain and precise," said the envoy, bluntly.

Some took this to be ambiguous; the Scots formed a kind of iron wedge, with their head at the point threatening the king.

"So fare ye all the better!" responded the Tudor, with that heartiness innate, but which he often forced to mask real astuteness. "Does James finally consent to adopt the Reformed Creed, destroy the monkeries in his confines, and recognize Messire Pope as just the Bishop of Rome?"

At each of these extreme points the hearers had started and their armor shivered loudly like dry leaves in a gust. The impassible faces did not change, but, internally, be sure, there was spite.

“Sire, the Scotland my master rules is unaltered in heart and spirit, since first she eschewed stones and blocks! For both, St. Peter’s successor is Christ’s vicar, and people and monarch cling firm unto the end. It’s their fathers’ faith, and they hold it as their own fame.”

“It is good!” said Henry. “This first reply to my first question could be foreseen in King James’ alliance with the family of the sanguinary butcher-duke of Guise! Instead of Hymen’s torch, the wedding took place by the glare of St. Bartlemy’s Eve! Later we shall decide how much of a warming to the argument this flame gives toward the passions of war!”

A grim smile of intense pleasure pervaded the Scottish phalanx; those who had feared that the embassy was to defer an appeal to arms, took courage; this king met taunts halfway.

“We hope,” said Sir John, affecting to be judicious, “your grace will keep the balance between peace and war with a hand as nice and as powerful, and that neither the bigot’s breath nor the counsel of biased persons will make the scales waver.”

“The resolution I am coming to depends less on your response, already cut and dried, methinks, than on the next one, Sir John!”

The Scots listened heedfully. Already, though the visitors had seen a great deal of England and a peep at London in this journey, they could not estimate the powers of the foe they were again to engage; but this hall full of warriors noted in their chronicles, the array of the Household Guards, chosen for their build and stature, all im-

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pressed them. The vastness of the gathering of citizens swarming about Charing Cross, had made them hope not at all—in case of one of these violent popular outbursts, when the rights of ambassadors went as chaff, they would, spite of their valor and indomitable prowess, be trampled to pulp. They felt cabined in a hall, however roomy, these sons of the moors and mountains.

“Hearken ye, one and all,” proceeded Henry, with his sonorous voice, “in a word, does the Fifth James of Scotland concede to make homage to me of the crown of Scotland, as has been done by his fathers unto mine, from the year nine hundred?”

Sir John’s nostrils fluttered; he heaved a breath in relief. The verbal fencing was over—the bout was begun.

In those days warriors read little, but the clerks poured into their ears certain facts as their minstrels poured the songs of their ancestral triumphs. Thirlstane knew to a letter the story of his country’s struggles against England; how the First Edward had conquered it, and how the royal vassage had been tendered under the Conqueror and his son the red king. Edgar had bowed to Henry the First, David to the Empress Matilda, David’s son to Stephen, and so on to Henry, Richard and John.

Over their heads waved and dustily rotted the banners taken in the northern wars, illustrating the futile resistance to servitude.

The break in the usage was during civil wars, when England’s rulers had their hands full of rebel weapons, aimed at their hearts. But as the jurists said, “Forbearance is no acquittance!” and Henry had the custom on

his side. Having let the remembrances percolate in his audience's bosoms, the sovereign took up his argument as if he had been speaking what they recalled.

"Now I, Sir John, as you know, being the minister of celestial vengeance, drowning out our rebels in their own blood; smothering heretics in the flames of their own pernicious books, and sweeping the remnants of hostility into a heap on the won field, to molder into dust, I have but to stretch out my hand, unfatigued by this chastisement, to beckon the Scots to renew their allegiance to their own nobility, that nobility to their immediate king, and that king to his king—he of England——"

He paused as if to invite a protest, but none were heard to breathe.

"As that king renders obeisance to the King of Kings!"

There was varied emotion, for eloquent divines there acknowledged that this rough and overbearing speaker had real nerve when the theme struck home to him.

All looked at the envoy, though expecting no reply but a weak one—certainly, a useless one.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHIEF TROPHY OF ENGLAND'S MIGHT.

Thirlstane's voice was noticeably tremulous at the first. He saw that he was withstanding a foregone conclusion.

"Pray, sire, overlook my being compelled to make a contrary reply to your grace than that apparently expected. But the homage of the ancient kings of the Scots was never rendered to your grace's foregoers but in respect to their lands possessed in England. In the same way as the English kings rendered homage to those in France for the duchies of Guienne and Normandy. Your grace knoweth, one sees, our mutual story too well to confuse the homage of Huntingdonshire with that of the realm; and the private homage of the kings of Northumberland with that of the kings of Scotland. Nothing can be argued from what passed under Baliol's rule, since our nobles ever protested against his doings. Truly, John Baliol did render homage to Edward the First, in acknowledgment of his help in placing him on the throne, but thereby he lost the esteem of his brother nobles and his people's love, and my King James is too highly valued by the ones and too dearly loved by the others to ever risk such a woe."

Henry looked on him and his approving comrades with placid face, as the bull counts the dogs about to be slipped at him, choosing the most formidable to horn first in the fray.

"I conclude," said he, "that my nephew refuses to own that I am his lord paramount!"

All hung upon the Scot's lip, so to say. He was aware of his position, for solemnly he replied:

"King James refuses homage."

"Having well weighed beforehand the outcome of that refusal?" said Henry, quickly, while all were heaving a breath of relief.

"He will bear the outcome! He cannot revoke what he spoke! Scottish kings wore swords before they sported crowns!"

As if it were a signal, all his friends clapped their hands to their sword hilts. The sound was the more terrible as it was unique; none but ambassadors are privileged to carry arms, and to smite them was an insult. But King Henry loftily waved his hand for none to resent his quarrels.

More majestic than elegant, portentous in his velvets and silk than the Scots in their warlike attire, he filled the daïs as if he were a hundred men in one.

"This is well, Sir John," said he, almost exultantly, "well! For we were waxing weary of these tributes sworn to on holy sites and over-sacred emblems!—sworn to, but to be evaded! Hear ye this! A while ago, I might have contented myself with what I asked. Now, by the lance of St. George! the armor being donned, all is changed. The great Creator's hand has set our two nations afar from the rest of the world, face to face, on one piece of land, but unequally divided by the narrow

waterway of the Tweed. Enough to part two provinces, but not two kingdoms!

"Hence, for a thousand years, the best and purest blood of two races has never ceased to dye one bank or the other. For that time not a torch has flared up in Scotland, but England's powerful breath has fanned it into a flame scorching many a town. The hate between these twain has been leagued by the mother in her milk to her daughter, and with the sire's sword it has been handed down to his son. Well, Sir John, this hatred would last us from generation to generation to the last day when sun shall set to rise no more, if I, Henry of England, had not bethought me to have done with it within my reign!"

There was sigh of alleviation as from bystanders who saw Alexander, after vainly tugging at the Gordian knot, sever the strands and the riddle by cutting through with his glaive.

"Homage is not enough for Henry—he exacts a conquest."

In the high cheek bones of the Scots one could see the anger glow as if touched with a red-hot brand. But they were well disciplined, and fixed their eyes on their chief, whom they had sworn to follow to the death if they evinced their feelings in London center, or to temporary acquiescence, if they expected to escape to their lines again.

There was a clank of metal, though, as they involuntarily moved with their muscles extending under their warlike raiment.

"However large an island is, it is ever too small for two kings! From this day out, there will be no longer a king of England and a king of Scotland! There will be the king over England and Scotland! That is all! *Primo mihi!* said the lion—"I am but one!" Let the God of battles decide the name—Henry or James!"

All this was kinglike. Sir John could only reply:

"Sire, there is but one God—the God of battle is also that of justice!"

Henry waved his hand—a gesture not everybody understood, but two ushers suddenly swept away the drapery enveloping one of the series of panoplies standing on oak pedestals along the hall, opposite the windows. They were historic suits of armor, from William the Conqueror to the vanquisher of Richard the Third. But the one draped and now unveiled stood apart from the regular line, for some occult reason only now made known. Dereham, with a prodigious effort of strength, absurd in one clad in silk and cloth of gold, applied his shoulder to the heavy stand and shoved the whole forward into plain view of the Scots. The push made the panoply vibrate and emit a hollow resonance.

The steel was magnificent, though allowed to become coated with *verd antique* and dust, like one of the hallowed effigies in an abbey. A whisper ran around the whole assembly, but seemed to linger lovingly among the strangers. With a beautiful movement, in unanimity, headgear was touched as if to be cast off, and many a pair of hands were clasped in prayer.

"King James! Jamie o' Flodden!" was the murmur.

106 Chief Trophy of England's Might.

This was, indeed, the celebrated suit of fluted and perfected armor, made by the finest smiths of Milan, casing the royal weaver from head to foot; beauty was combined with safety. The absence of cumbrousness made the whole seem small, but it would have gone over the most gigantic yeoman present. The helmet was of a graceful and natural form, as if molded to the human head. It was in a suit of Milanery that two forces of chevaliers fought from morn to night without any one being killed or even wounded!

The gilding had turned green in traces, the shoulder-guards were hacked, the plumes were shorn off; the eye-holes in the visor, shut, had no gleam of light. But the impression of a hero having animated that shell was deep. In that, King James the Fourth had been stricken down dead on Flodden-field. Those streaks of rust on the greaves may have been caused by the blood of his son or the nobles felled around him. In the knot of lookers-on were descendants of the twelve counts, and seventeen barons, who had laid their bones as a rampart around the Lion of Scotland. On the burnished breast, where a crown was inlaid in gold, a reft was plain—through that an English lance-head had bored its way to the indomitable heart.

At identifying, so to say, this most glorious of England's trophies, Sir John felt a red mist over his strained eyes. He shuddered with rage succeeding his sorrow. Beside him, strong men stifled their sobs. At a word of his indignation a score of swords and spears would have again been immersed in English blood; but he and his

adherents would never have reached the courtyard by the doorway—they would have been hurled out of the casement, piecemeal, from the edge of ax and point of halberds.

“Prudent as a Scot!”—“Brave as a Scot!” two contradictions, but they were sentiments lying side by side in these visitors.

Henry seemed to respect their sensation. He resumed severely and loftily, but perhaps a little commiseratingly:

“I vow, on my crown and my scepter, Sir John, that with what armor, foreign or home-forged, you environ Scotland, and be it ever so well-tempered, I shall, like the Englishman who struck at your chief, cleave a gash so wide that all the rebel blood will gush out of the heart!”

Sir John exchanged a sad look with his friends. In spite of their regard for the stranger guests, the English wore a tranquil smile vivified by the memories of victory which that silent, hollow image recalled. Sir John wished to meet this front with one as exalted. He cleared his throat, turned his eyes from the mournful memento, and said, as he eyed the king resolutely:

“Before the deadly arm reaches her beloved heart, sire, you must overthrow the last stone of her last city wall, and slay the last of her arm-bearers! The old wives will take the feathers of the brooding fowl to trim the arrows—the priests will melt the blessed coffins to cast the bullets and the well-chains will wrap the great siege guns round before you cheer over a country where the mothers do not greet at war! As for the Thirlstane who

has the honor to speak for his king in your presence and that of the ghost therein! I was kindly regarded as worthy of my family cry, 'Ready and Steady!' Therefore, I should belie it if I stayed to breakfast, or did not eat on the road and sleep in the saddle! For I itch, saving your grace, to return to head the first troopers who march southerly—ho! to buckle with thee, your gentlemen and gentry, in battle—with one voice crying, 'Thirlstane, stand steady!' "

Some bonnets were tossed in the air, but the Scots nobly repressed the inclination to cheer this bold reply. Henry would have excused them, for he smiled blandly if not benignly. He loved a woman well—but a brave man better.

Dereham looked heatedly at the Scot.

"Would you dam the torrent?" he began to say, but a glance of his master repressed him.

"Go, go, Sir John, and with what speed you may!" said the latter. "Let me not detain you on a good errand! It's a pretty device of your own, as I said in the first, but we have a many of them in England, pretty because we act up to them! But we kings of this land have our own which we have none of us let fall into the dust. Before the moon is old and young again, I hope that, in every town of Scotland, letters of fire will glare this motto o'er each citadel—so all may read——"

Stepping back and to one side, he pointed to the motto on the blue ribbon around the royal escutcheon. And instantly the English exclaimed:

"God and my Right!"

"*Dieu et mon Droit!*" repeated Henry, retracing his steps so as to be almost face to face with Sir John anew. "My cousins, peers and gentlemen, give ye full honors to the ambassador—not of the King of Scotland, our foe—but of my nephew, James the Fifth!"

The court broke up. Out on the space, the long-waiting multitude made the hedges for the northern envoys to retire to their inn of the White Saltire. As the *cortège* came forth, proud, cold and very haughty, the choristers in the royal chapel were singing:

"The Lord the King is a mighty shield and a strong spear!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE KING'S CONFIDENCE IS A BURDENSOME THING.

The bearers of the Scottish defiance had gone, but in Whitehall still seemed to resound the shrill pibroch's chanter and the ominous boom of their drone. After them they left cause for much business.

The king had a reputation for being indolent and negligent in public affairs, opposed to the maxim he liked to look up to, lettered in his study, "It is diligence passes sense!" but he had his spells of seriousness when he out-tasked his secretaries. At the end of three weeks, however, he had fagged from the accounts of the navy and army, the latter to be sent to Scotland and the fleet to meet at Portsmouth.

Thereupon was repeated his disappearances, rarely commented upon except with a lenient smile. Yet it was believed it was late in the day for him to waste time in carousals of the lowest, broadest order with cobblers, jolly beggars and such "gibbet-fowl," as recorded in "The Merry Tales." As these absences were found now to accord with the similar absences of his astrologer, Fleming, and his favorite, Dereham, all was ascribed to a mingling of private pleasuring and occult pursuits, after which, undeceived as to both frivolity and transcendental lures, he would return to business again.

Indeed, after presiding at the council board with much

clearness and a rejuvenescence dispelling the idea that he was gravely discussing certain matrimonial projects of European invention, he signed the last document of a sheaf with a sigh of relief, and, all alone, went out upon the gallery overlooking the gardens with view of the bend of the Thames at Westminster.

A monster sweet bay tree sent up its aroma and a row of orange trees in tubs made symmetrical lines. But the sovereign was in no mood for recreating himself with floriculture.

He paced up and down impatiently until he was joined, as he had sent a page to bring about, by Lord Dereham.

The latter came with secret dislike, as, under plea of having to marshal his tenants to select those fit to march north, he was chafing to quit the palace.

The king seized him by the arm, having a proneness of late to lean—and not too lightly, on his companion, and they walked up and down the inclosure in quiet and loneliness, as the king had been doing.

The royal countenance was still flushed, and his eyes were brilliant.

“What do you think, ‘Wolf,’ of our nephew’s outbreak?” asked he, abruptly.

Dereham seemed relieved at this recurrence to the monopolizing topic for that week.

“I think that a king was lucky who could lay his hand upon a spokesman so respectfully forbearing while terse and outspoken in his replies.”

“Ah, if you had been my mouthpiece to Jamie, you

would not have been able to contain yourself like Sir John?"

"I am not a third his age."

"You are just as prudent, boy! Never did I meet with a stripling so profound and self-governed. As for Thirlstane, he is noted of old. He is a worthy Scot, with the sole flaw that, hedged in by his mountains and frigid with their snows, he believes we are under the thrall of Robert the Bruce and Sir William Wallace. He rates hearts as the same at five or six centuries distance, because the same cap covers all heads in his country. He is like an antique state still standing on a military road; his stony eyes not remarking that the passersby vary with each generation. Did you peer among his clan? would you find there the Black Douglasses and the Ruddy Randolphins? They are carrying their fathers' claymores, but find them too heavy and clumsy for their hands. They are Sinclairs and Mexwells, whom he brought—who had second thought, of caution, before they plucked out the blades and strove to cut out their old hero-king's suit from our court. Oh, the come-down in it!"

"Dear my lord, I tell you that such men will not whiten a single hair of mine, whether I go into the carnage or send the Lord of Norfolk to combat in my stead. My sword is long and trenchant, but it's the sword that cleaves—if it do not reach far enough in my hand, why, I can hurl it where it does not reach. A murrain on this James' kicking at the pricks! It is nothing of the prospect of a war with him, though France comes chanting Roland's song at his back, which casts me down——"

"You are cast down?" repeated the confidant, incredulously.

"Down into misery! But not the lookout north—it is the peep into my bosom, my lord!"

He sat down on the stone bench, which lined the gallery by the house wall.

"I am amazed that your lordship should be in misery!" muttered the earl.

"It is odd, is it not? Triumphant without and within, after merging the White Rose and the Red into me—so that any man can don the hybrid without bringing a quarrel on him!"

Dereham looked closely at the speaker. Henry was firmly fastened not only in England, but even on the Main. It was known to the young noble, admitted to the council, that France would prefer to pay handsomely to buy back its conquered territory rather than try to oust the enemy from it by force of arms. Of the result of the war with Scotland the earl also had no doubt. Bribed by restoration of the lost provinces, King Francis would probably check any considerable flow of his knights to cross into Scotia.

"May your grace excuse, but human ambition must be vaster than the world, since the world does not satiate it!"

"You young sage, it is not the anger of waves and winds which wrecks a solid vessel, but——"

"What?"

"It is the little point, the hidden rock! Its wound is destructible because one cannot get at it to heal it. True,

is it, that I am great and strong? There is not one of my subjects who does not envy me—not one, not even the swine herd gnawing birch bark in the forest; but I do not envy.”

His hearer heard the sigh as an “Amen!” to this avowal with a kind of trepidation.

“It is so,” he replied to the look of disbelief. “Weighty is the crown and one may pardonably look for a pillow on which to rest the head after the burden is laid aside. Weighty is the scepter, and one wishes to thrust it aloof, to lay the tired hand in a soft and loving one. Beside that glare of the hall where all the doors are folded back and all the curtains torn down from the windows, one longs for the shade of private repose. Grandeur of the palace! Where is the nook full of the happiness of home?”

Dereham was sympathetic, but something made him hesitate to say a word; he even averted his eyes.

“Look you, the meanest of those who cap to me and crook the neck may have a loving wife and child to climb, crowing, on his knee, while the lowest, who would make me happy, is not so debased that I would not stoop to lift her up!”

“My lord! you who have wed—who have had queens fawn and fan you! you who have the prince to train up at your knee!”

“The queen! the queens—my consorts! Do you point to the rigid Catherine of Aragon, stiff as the castles and haughty as the lions!—who might have been a suppliant wife but for the domineering father-confessor at her back

and her nun-like *cameristass* always in the curtain folds! She was espoused to my brother, who was blessed in avoiding that fate, though the price was untimely death! This was not a comfort to my heart, but a sting for my conscience."

Dereham was silent, knowing that this scruple was a fundamental test of the parasite that hoped to cling any time around that royal oak.

"I was forced, if I had respect for marital privacy, unintruded upon by sisters and fathers, under their black gowns and gray coifs, to repudiate her and with that her onerous conveners.

"You will say that the light and playful Ann Bullen was the direct foil——"

Dereham said nothing; he refrained from a noisy respiration.

To parade to a bridegroom who believed that he would love but once, this array of wives was irritating.

"Ann! fie! with the same light step she passed out of the nuptial chamber upon the scaffold. Do you say 'Seymour' now? Jane Seymour—sainted Jane! Yes, there was an angel from the skies, but the begrudging skies recalled her all too soon! Yet, a little earlier and she might have escaped the poisoner!"

Dereham glanced briefly at the choleric and revengeful countenance, and blessed his stars that he had not been prominent at Court when that queen was lost.

"There is another Ann! Oh, crenelation of contrasts! the Princess of Cleves! that huge faggot reported to me at the first as lissom and graceful! Leviathan, lissom!

Behemoth, buoyant! But you did not see that thing of grease!"

Dereham dared not smile, or he should have lost all favor in laughing at a fat man deriding his commensurately stout spouse.

"A man of my capacity deceived by a German court painter—as if a court painter ever painted without flattery's brush! Oh, Hans Holbein! if you had drawn truly and colored without laying the tempting hues too thickly, your portrait of Ann would have been like to the ancient limner's, which made the beholders die alaughing! She came, Dereham—I saw—and she—disgusted! But she had some sterling faculty—she granted that there was a cheat! She went gladly home, content that the King of England should remember her—as a sister!"

Dereham shrank within himself at this outpouring of secret thoughts. Had not Lord Cromwell said: "As fatal to be Henry's friend as his wife!"

"What remains now of happy memories out of four marriages?" continued the king in one of "his black moods." "A few days' bliss! and a long blistering of the bosom! Twenty odd years of remorse and chagrin over wasted time! Two daughters whom the rules constraining sovereigns declare incapable of reigning, and a son"—his voice sounded like a sob—"a son whom Nature declares incapable of living!"

His auditor respected his grief, though he now doubted not that he would not be respected in his own. But he could not rejoice over this great hulk—a wreck of hope.

"Sire, since you are in the prime, why may not another match make up for what has been so far lacking?"

"That is the way the keeper of the gaming tables speaks to a player whom he wishes to keep on playing. "Keep drawing at the straws until you catch the long one! What do the old wives say? that marriages are made in heaven! But, methinks, the wheel which shuffles the tickets is turned by an infernal hand."

"My great lord, the spider renews its web many times before it makes it stand and ensnare."

"It's the other way about, Wolf! There are spiders which weave to ensnare kings!—even when they are in the web, too! No, no, my wise young adviser, no more drumming in the royal courtyards for a partner! No *bellamour* of the princely houses!"

He spoke so emphatically that Dereham listened with avidity.

"I am weary of furnishing material in my domestic infelicities for the court fools. Out of these bickerings, on my heart rise terrible spreading flames; out of my mis-marriage with the first of my Kates—my fates!—arose the war with Spain, which left me the dupe of its ruler! And I was saddled with Spain's daughter beside. My sending the blowsy Ann home raised Flanders and Hainault against me! My sending Ann Bullen to her just doom repelled the Rochforts and the Norfolks!

"As England is secured by her watery bulwarks, no alliance can augment my strength. I may seek solely in a young woman beauty to please, virtue to make faithful,

and wit to amuse. The conditions under which she was born need not sum up a midget's weight!"

Dereham, seeing some fatigue in his companion's step, kindly snatched off his cloak and, rolling it up into a pillion, threw it on the stone bench for the monarch to sit upon at ease.

He plucked a flower and, separating the petals, hummed with stress the ancient ballad of "The King and the Beggar-maid!"

"Oh, I know," said Henry, smiling forcibly. "Or rather I am not going to caper to your piping! Your beggar-maid turned out to be a real princess in disguise, I believe!"

"They do, in songs! But," said the noble, with unobtainable sincerity, "a young, beautiful and virtuous woman is a princess to the quick!"

"Have with you, boy!" Then, becoming very grave, he said in his deep voice, which could shiver a drinking glass with its intensified tremolo: "I have lifted two men out of the base to be prime ministers of my empire. One was but a butcher's boy, but he bore the mace with as much ease as the tray! The other, a blacksmith's bellows-puller—but he blew up a pretty fire and forged many an iron which the foreigner hastened to let drop! I may well let my country—where, thanks to me, the nobles have displaced the priests, and, by my help, the merchant will displace the noble—I may well let my country owe its next prince to the brawn and lustiness of the common blood!"

Dereham blushed. He trembled with resentment.

"A peasant?" he said, but suddenly remembering that he had just loved and wooed and wed without prejudice, against all his pride of race and ingrained predispositions, he blushed again, but like a scholar blundered into correcting when he was in error.

"Yes, a peasant! Was there not a peasant maid sent to redeem our neighbor of France from our yoke, and why should there not be a holy provider for England?"

"St. George, be our guide!" said the young man, evasively.

"St. George has guided me!"

"To the cave where the griffins hold the maid captive! To the Outland—a Fingal's Cave—or Merlin's Haunt?"

"To nothing hallowed—nothing surrounded by ancient memories. Just a rustic maid, one of those remnants of the civil wars—found in ruins after a battle, by an old nurse, who brings her up as her own, of whom she was bereft."

"An old nurse—a battle waif?"

"I saw her, on the upper Thames."

"On the upper Thames, my lord?" repeated the other with the faithfulness of one fearing to go astray of the route over dangerous ground.

"Among the fens and meads of Isleworth, or Datchet, or that way out. Faith! here we have a king of England who dispatches troops to the northern marches, or ships to the Gulf of Gascony, who cannot walk alone ten miles from St. Paul's cross, without being in an uncharted country!"

"Dwelling alone, with but an old woman? We are

far from the days when such patient Grizzels were under charge of dwarfs and hideous genii, then!"

"I cannot tell by what secreted watchers she was guarded. I was warned that some great lord presumably was in the background, who feared that the lamb would be taken by the prowler."

"You discourse, my king, as if you had seen her—spoke with her, this ward, worthy of a color-guard?" He felt his heart poised on a dagger point while awaiting the response.

"I have seen her—and yet not what most would call 'seeing.'"

Dereham did not catch the final words, which made the answer ambiguous. He said to himself, with death in his bosom: "He has seen her—the king has seen Catherine!" and clasped his hands.

"The name of this creature, dwelling in utter ignorance of her stupendous fortune," proceeded the royal lover-general, "will soon have to be laid before my state council, for the decision on the dower to entitle her to her lofty position——"

All was settled; the king was going to make his charmer the Queen of England, if he could do so.

"But before all, my friend, you should know it, since you must use it in doing me the favor I am about to desire——"

"A favor to your grace, from one who owes your grace so many and plenty! It is already rendered in spirit," returned the earl, for once feeling that he was a liar. He bowed to conceal his red cheek.

"I thought so. Her name is Catherine——"

"Cath——" but the rest choked the hearer.

"It seems if we were foredoomed to Kates," said Henry, laughing at his own well-known quibble. "But, in this case, on her, her very name blooms and has its peculiar savor!"

"Kate? It is fatality!"

"Fatality, indeed—I am always racked on these Catherine wheels!"

Dereham could have struck him over the lips for the jesting. He leaned on the stone urn.

"But that cannot be all her name? none so poor but to carry with them the trade of their sire, the name of their birthplace——"

"No; she is the offshoot of—who knows what stem? She was found on a battlefield—amid ruins—what matters all that? We find her luxury, station, happiness—we must, too, find her name! Come, let us play 'Questions and Answers!' This child of the people, of nobody—ward of the king—what is the name for her?"

"Let the ward be a ward—why not a Howard?"

"Because you are allied to the Howards?"

Dereham was silent. The Howards had been under a cloud since Ann Bullen's fall.

"Catherine Howard," said the king, slowly. "Yes, that sounds stately, and yet it is simple. She shall be a Howard for the chronicles. Then, Ethelwolf, be prepared to do greeting to your poor cousin Catherine!"

"My poor cousin?"

"They might have discountenanced one backed up

sheerly by Fleming's prophecy that she was foreset for the crown of my consort, but they will hail her, who is supported by the Duke of Norfolk and the Earl of Dereham, as Catherine of the Howards!" He rubbed his hands with appeased excitement.

"Fleming—that old seer has been the instigator of this grafting upon the Howards?" muttered Dereham.

"Yes, this time his sorcery is most innocent and delectable! But you are restless——"

Dereham was tearing the flowers of the urn to pieces, so that the shreds fell heavily at his feet.

"Impatient to hear all," returned he, sullenly. "It is a marvel that the old meddler can do innocent cozenage!"

"My lord, you who are young and hale, you cannot do justice to the Fleming's good parts. He is more than a magic-dealer—he is a sound doctor of the body and mind. Did he not cure you of the camp fever brought out of France?"

"I should have grown out of that, as we do out of measles!"

"And I—with simply tying a string around my calf when I felt the gout mounting to my waist, checked it—he anointed it with oil, and fired it, and, without my feeling the singeing, it drove back the agony! Never have I felt the pangs higher than my ankle since that."

"Ah, if he can prevent anguish stealing up to the heart, I shall consult him yet!"

"He has brewed drafts which put vigor into my poor ailing boy!" pursued the king, tenderly.

"I see that, though the soothsayer has been called no real friend of mine, he is pardoned now!"

"I suppose, like most of his brother jugglers, he has stepped over the pale of laudable practices; but—let it pass."

"It is well for his sake that he tries to undo what his fellows were accused before the Privy Council of doing—we found in the garret of an alchemist, in Bell alley, a waxen effigy of Prince Edward, which was set on a needle before a slow fire—as it melted, so would the unhappy prince pine and peak!"

"Well—Fleming was not of that band?"

"One escaped, who—but I see that Fleming is serving you well!"

Henry stamped his foot, though the rash movement cost him a twinge, after he professed that his magician had healed him.

"If we but discover the principal who escaped the gallows! Oh, it is not Fleming, for he has fortified Edward, so that he can keep the saddle on his pony for an hour, on Blackheath common. It was to harvest remedies from nature's chest, not from the necromancer's closet, that he has, I believe, explored every hole and corner within sound of big Paul's bell."

"Yes, he has wide and intimate local knowledge!" sneered the earl. "It was in roaming around that he was seized and like to be hanged for a foreign spy!"

"That time you saved his neck! Do you regret it?"

"Not so much as the gold he has melted out of my

purse with the promise of making my life as long as I desired, to—serve your majesty!”

“Yes, to prosecute this search for the secret of longevity, he retires from the palace—he established himself, as now I know, in the Tower of Espial, all that remains of Needington Priory.”

“He occupies the tower of the ruined priory?”

“Yes, I allowed him to have the run of the abandoned ground on which I had salt sown, when it was dismantled! Like the monks, he watches the stars there by night, and the flowers—of mankind—by day!

“He spies from Needington Tower, does he?” said Dereham, interested.

“He spied to some purpose—he spied out this jewel—this Catherine—and like Chanticleer, on finding a prize, he set up the cry for another to admire his find!”

“He called your highness to Needington?”

“To give me the lion's share! The other day, when you were refused admittance to my presence, I was not engaged in studying Lord Suffolk's plan of war, but I was at the other end of Middlesex!”

“At Needington?”

“With Fleming, in his observatory.”

“And you observed”—said Dereham, faltering, as if his tongue was beyond control.

“That is, I viewed. Fleming led me into a cell, walled up, black as a chimney after winter! He bade me look down, and immediately, at my feet, there appeared, as in a frame of ebony, a view of the country, illumined by the sunshine. A garden—in its center something sur-

passing in beauty and charm all that one has seen in flower and bird."

"It was Catherine!"

The king did not cavil at the enthusiasm of the young noble.

"Yes——"

"But this was not reality—it was on a cloud—a vision?"

"Oh, Fleming had no secrets from me. It was an apparatus, a means by arranging reflecting glasses to bring objects near and so clearly!"

"I know—the black cell of the Italian philosophers."

"You are right—he called it a *camera nera*!"

"Then, you have seen—C-Catherine only at a distance, in the far distance?"

"True," he mused, while Dereham breathed less oppressedly. "But such vividness! Her eyes sparkled as if within a yard—her hand I could have grasped!"

The earl's hand crept upon his dagger hilt with which it trifled.

"And her hair undulated—one tress came unloosed, and I felt, as it were, that it grazed my cheek!"

Never had the king been so near being slain in his own palace.

"Well, into that garden you must hie."

"I, sure!"

"Yes, you and none other! That garden, surrounding with bloom that humanized chrysolite! It is ordained that beauty shall be furnished with a casket like the pearl is with its iridescent shell!"

"But, after all, a glimpse—a reflection—if this is but a guile of the servant of evil?"

Henry laughed.

"Why may he not have painted this image as a decoy upon his magic mirror? There is no such perfection! Conjurers are like couriers—they confederate with tempters to impose——"

"To impose on fools! I knew the proverb, though you have twisted it. Well, that darling was never tool of the designing. But there is more to tell."

"More!" sighed Dereham, like a wretch on the torture bench, on hearing the judge order another turn of the excruciating screw.

"Fleming has drawn up the divinity's horoscope!"

"He! Then he must know her, you see—they are fellow connivers!"

The other shook his head.

"He need not know what he divines!"

"What does he foresee?" asked the earl, as if daunted.

"His cast is that her worth, her beauty and her birth entitle her to the highest honors! The powers on high have decreed that the kingdom will bow down to her, from its loftiest head to its lowliest. She is indispensable to——"

"The preservation of England?" said Dereham, cuttingly.

"To my happiness," replied the sensualist, as if this silenced all argument. "She has her page in the history of my reign."

"So? I see that fortune still favors the fortunate!"

This rural beauty, who should have been courted to the accompaniment of her spinning-wheel, will flourish a fan with all the recognized ornaments of your court?"

"Surely as the king holds a court."

"A nonentity!"

"A lady by her deserts!"

"Well, chameleons do not dispute about colors!"

"She combines Bullen's beauty and sprightliness with Jane Seymour's grace and gentleness!"

Henry, instead of being angered, was pleased that Dereham's remonstrances brought him out as champion of his new attachment.

"I see—it is a non-such, as like to Venus as cherry to cherry!" He let his hands fall beside him in desperation. "Woe!" he murmured.

"Woe? My recalling Bullen and Seymour! No omen! May neither of their fates befall Catherine—you may register that prayer to prove the sincerity of my passion!"

Dereham, looking at him, felt his heart turn to a stone. This time, it was not a little fire which would soon be trodden out.

It was the great idolatry of a dotard. Catherine was lost to Dereham, her husband, and to the world!

Henry had risen and went slowly down the steps into the gardens. Twilight was beginning to cover the scene. Dereham shook himself as one enveloped with a deathly chill, and followed him. After a turn or two the other had paused by a sundial. The king looked listlessly at its face, now clouded so as to be useless. Around the

face, like numerals encircling a clock plate, letters formed a motto. Something altering the familiar line attracted his attention, but not sufficiently for him to understand. He was very distracted, indeed. Dereham looked where he had done, but saw more than he.

"Your jester has been here before—he has corrected the legend," said he, laying his finger to the line.

"What does it say?"

"It said: 'All Hours Wound and the Last One Kills!'"

"It is true enough, but——"

"The fool you had from Cardinal Wolsey likes to amend the wisdom of our old sages——"

"Well, well?" frowning.

"It reads now: 'All *Houris* Wound, but the Last One Kills!'"

"What's a *houri*?"

"Fleming could have told you that—it is Persian for a beautiful woman!"

If he had let the least grain of sarcasm impregnate his gibe, the king would at last have suspected something. But as his voice was excellently ruled, Henry did not move a muscle.

"I am not like my brother of France," said he, slowly. "He thinks all women are fickle—I do not—only all the needles would be steady if they were touched by the lodestone of love!"

"He thinks Catherine will love him!" thought Dereham, turning aside.

Henry came to a conclusion.

"Ethelwolf," said he, "you shall be the judge of the basis for my great determination. It is you I choose to bring Catherine, whom we call a Howard, unto the court."

"To the court? I?"

"While I speak with Norfolk about discovering she is his relative! Yes, you bring her hither!"

"It would be with sorrow on the crupper!" muttered the young peer.

"I can trust no other! You are a man of good faith, of thorough endearment toward me, and unsullable honor. You are as my brother—you should be my deputy! Select your escort of prudent and discreet gentlemen, and bring the lady here."

"Do you say 'here' to the palace?"

"To the palace, here!"

"To you—to your grace?"

"Oh, no—not so abrupt! To the apartments of the Princess Margaret. Say to the princess that you bring to her a poor orphan who has but just been unearthed from under the *débris* of the last civil war. She is your cousin! The princess will be kind to any one under your special ward!" said Henry, slyly. "The princess will receive her as one of her maids of honor!"

"Honor?"

"You can recommend her—many a Howard has been devoted to the Tudor!"

"It seems to me," ventured Dereham, with forced deliberation, "that though a king may be never too speedy in making a war, he will incur censure if too slow in

making a match. Should there not be a reasonable interval between the divorce from the Princess of Cleves and the nuptials with—the Lady—Catherine Howard?"

Again Dereham would have brought his death upon him if he had not spoken this without feeling and like a grave counselor.

"Cousin," returned Henry, like one who in answering this was doing so to the hundred critics whom his mind brought up before it like a bench of judges, "how many days elapsed between Ann Bullen's ascension to the scaffold and Jane Seymour's ascension to the throne?"

The earl was standing. He took a step nearer his lord, as if to be sure that his manner as well as his words should be considered.

"No more than the undertaker required to lay the body away in the tomb—three!" replied he in a solemn voice.

"How many between Norris' disobedience, anent the said Lady Bullen, and my order for it to be punished, with loss of his all, rank, estate and life?"

Not once had Ethelwolf heard his friend and master address him in this vein. But he did not wince. He stood as he had stood, and replied in the same unvarying voice:

"No more than required by the lord high keeper of the seals to go from the Tower to Greenwich Palace—two!"

"And how much time from the issue of this order to the headsman and the culprit's death?"

"No more than to swing an ax and bring it down!"

Neither tone nor attitude quailed.

For the very first time, Henry found he was facing a man whom he could not outface.

“Very well, Dereham! I see that you thoroughly know the story of my reign. Profit by it. Go your errand, the while reflecting upon it.”

Then, leaving the earl, he went up the stairs, without looking back, thinking to himself:

“That is a rare man! Under the lion’s paw, he merely studied where he should drive his knife in! I must weld Ethelwolf to me by the tightest bands. There was an earl called King-maker! Now, it is on my head not to let a later earl be called the King-breaker!”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EGG OF THE PHOENIX.

Without knowing he was moving, Earl Dereham wandered about the gardens. Another would have mechanically started upon the royal mission, but without having resolved to disobey, he ceased to think of his master and solely of himself as regarded his union with Catherine.

He felt outdone in a competition for her heart. He had married her and thereby ennobled her, but the king counted on making her his equal by thus allying her with the Howards. He gave her his coronet—the king tendered his crown. He offered her Dereham domain, the king held out all England.

Certainly he reflected, but not on the record of the reigning Tudor. But to delay any longer was to bring on madness. He followed on the footsteps of the king, picked up and adjusted his mantle with care, and re-entered the palace. If he had had the commission on his mind he would have descended to the stables and ordered out horses for himself and his escort. But he went by devious ways, all under cover, to the northern wing, where, near enough to the Strand to hear the noise of that busy street, yet ensconced in the thickest walls of old-masonry, where Wolsey had kept his treasures, Fleming had his chemical apparatus.

Drawing his dagger, he rapped on the iron panels in a

preconcerted mode. On hearing shuffling steps within, he called out at risk of revealing a wrath he could not yet entirely control:

“Haste out, you churl of Flanders! It is your disciple who wants speech of you.”

Although the seeker after the forbidden light must have recognized the visitor, he had such good cause not to thrust himself within his reach without examination that he opened—not the ponderous door, but a small wicket in it. Dereham no doubt meant to conceal his true sentiments, but yet his unease at least was evident.

“What am I to do for your lordship?” questioned Fleming without touching the formidable fastenings.

“Let me in!”

Hesitating no longer, as if he would run the risk, the old man undid bolt and bar and also shot back the lock pin with its large key. Dereham pushed past and quietly waited until he was shut in with him and the fastenings renewed. This confidence must have won him over to the host's side, had he not been too fully enlightened upon his conduct.

The space was divided into two apartments. The inner contained the tools of the chemist and this outer was library and sitting-room.

“Are you alone?” and the earl spied into every corner by the rays of a very good lamp and some reflections from the furnace at high heat.

“I am.”

Another would have asked if it were the hour for the familiar spirit of all necromancers, but the initiate was

too well informed to be a gull. At all events, the king had not preceded him to this retreat.

"You will want the devils of the deepest pit to save you—you are in your direst peril."

"I am unmoved."

"Oh, we are all calm when there are ships out in the storm if we do not own the ships! Your venture is in peril, I repeat."

The old sage jerked up his bent arms and extended the thumbs outward, which is one way of repelling bad influences.

"Know that the king has been speaking privately with me."

"It is not for the first time!" said the astrologer, with a grin.

"Gibber like that again, and I will break in your muz-zard till featureless! I left the king in intense bliss——"

"May you ever leave him in that mood, and be that his for now and all to come!"

"I know all that parrotry! I learn from him that you are not content to work out and study his pleasure, but others' besides yourself! You give a jog of your elbow to Fortune!"

"The seeker for nature's treasures does not do that for himself, but for his friends and patrons—for the world of his fellows eventually—without that disinterestedness, he will not be rewarded by the guardians over all that we desire! His reward is a pittance to keep him still toiling for others. He labors for the pleasure of it."

"But it costs a fortune to fill the insatiable maw of that

furnace of yours! I never believe that you go out of your way at your own expense! You may seek the happiness and benefit of others, but—out with it! What do you seek continuously for yourself alone?”

“I thought that you, from whom I have not had a secret that you could support the weight of—you know my quest.”

“Potable gold, long life, some absurdity!”

Fleming fixed him with his unquenchable sight.

Apparently he concluded that this interview would result as usual in his befooling the inquirer. Dereham's recovered quiet hid the turbulence with which he had quitted the gardens.

“I seek not long life so much as the renewal of life. But I am on the threshold at last.”

“I have heard you say that a hundred times!” and the noble laughed, in spite of his indisposition.

“Come with me!”

A widow had been recessed in with bars of iron so that with three sides the wall, the other was a grating. In this cage, protected by wooden lining and a lamp to keep up heat, a mass of feathers, so it appeared, was flung on a heap of chips of scented wood; the whole smelled of aromatic substances.

“You have never heard of the Phoenix, my lord! You are to see what has been accounted a wonder of the world!”

He thrust his lean hand between the bars and shook this mass of feathers. Slowly and, as it were, indig-
nantly, a figure rose, carrying up the feathers with it and

by a proud effort shaking them into their due order and place.

Instead of the shapeless mass of incongruous colors, a bird presented itself to Dereham's admiring and wonder-stricken eyes. The body was small, but the feathers now animated each with a separate and exuberant life, spread, and shot out, and juttied up as if the whole prodigy were a hedgehog etherealized. This simile occurred to Dereham, though he was romantic and poetic. But apart from the enchantment in the grace of feathers of all sorts, scaly, long and hairy, broad and yet light, was that of diversity in hues, and the mode by which this diversity was produced. The observer acknowledged that nature had no bounds. The colors were all imaginable, in all tints and shades, accentuated by the effect of mottled, watered, and changeable, to draw terms from crafts and other materials; they were carried to the extreme. And all this variation went on as if the bird was conceited beyond a peacock, which was to its magnificence as a ground bird to a pheasant. It was an ornithological kaleidoscope—a riot of coloration, a shifting which gratified the eye and yet teased it.

Dereham, in contemplating this evanescent and yet constant beauty, forgot all—though what rested on his heart was the one grief of all his life.

"Superb! splendrous!" sighed he, so low that it seemed that he was afraid he would disperse the show by his breath.

"It is the Phoenix!" said Fleming, feeling some of the awe and impressiveness of the glory himself.

It was probably a bird of paradise, but the popular superstition would side with the alchemist in his naming.

"The Phoenix!" repeated the visitor.

"At least one of them, for I believe there are many!" said the seer, as proud of his superior lore as of the rarity. "But all the rest is true! It is unique as to sex and it reproduces its kind in an unparalleled way!"

Dereham gazed as if to have his fill of a vision which must vanish and would never be repeated.

"Do you see this?" He held out an object which his companion did not see—so dazzled were his eyes.

It was what is called a bezoar stone, an animal secretion rounded and polished while made excessively solid and hard by its long aggregation. This one was of an oval shape.

"It is the egg of the Phoenix," said the alchemist. "When one of these dies, after having made its nest and pyre of sweet woods, it is this which heats up within its decaying carcass, and, at the proper time, bursts into flame. Out of the remains, its vital germ finds the matter purified by the fire, to engender another such incomparable bird!"

Dereham slowly recovered his calm. The bird, like a peacock resenting a spectator too undemonstrative in his appreciation, suddenly collapsed; all the light framework of this fluff subsided as the nautilus vanishes within itself, and, again, there was but a mass of mixed feathers in the bottom of the cage, concealing the head and body; even the eyes, surrounded by a white rim like ivory, were hidden.

"Well?" said Dereham, sharply.

He remembered that he was angry with this seer.

Rapt in his theme, the latter did not notice the tone. He was poisoning the "egg" and handling it with affection.

"There being more than one of its kind, there is no interfering with nature's kingdom," said he as to himself, "in diverting this egg from its purpose!"

The noble did not say a word. He set his back to the cage, as if he would no longer be charmed from his intention.

"Let a man eat this, and he should, in his turn, have the power to rise from his ashes——"

"You are driveling," interrupted the earl with contumely. "Eat the thing for your supper, if you are to sup here, and not off the earth altogether. You have destroyed one of my fancies—as you have my greatest one, perhaps!"

"There was an Egyptian lay dead nine hours," rambled the other, forgetting him as he replaced the egg in a box in the wall with the utmost care; "it is recorded that he revived by eating of an 'Adam's fig.' I think the text is corrupted! It might have been a Phoenix——"

"Your foul master take the egg and the bird! List to me! Despoil this credulous and rapacious king of ours of his gold—I have winked at that all along, for your teachings enlighten and amuse me—but when it comes to your depriving me of my treasure——"

"Your treasure? Why, say, they not that to your lordship has been diverted the Peter's pence which no longer flows to Rome? What has the king ever bestowed

upon me but your grace has had as much ten times over? You came to me, a boy, as it were, and I foretold you then the steps of your rise—privy-counsellor, though the other lords are grandsires to you! Keeper of the king's private seal, his secretary, his friend, his brother—yes, that you will be!"

His hearer waved his hand to hush him; under other circumstances here was what had made a statesman, a prince, a governor of him, but now the honors were hollow. "The king's brother"—like those royal brothers born oppositionists to the ruler.

"You, Fleming, you have promised all this—much has been verified—it rested with me to bring all into substantiality—but you have promised the king more than me! Why did you not let him seek, without your infernal guidance, this new partner, fair, young, bright and bewitching?"

The old man tottered so that he threatened to fall. The earl did not lift a finger to stay him. He followed him step for step until his heels struck the wall.

"Ah, you taught me too much—I am a seer, too! You have betrayed me!"

The magician saw that he had no defense but one, to him supreme, but of what weight to this incensed lover!

"You did not learn this, my lord, that the man a woman loves should never thwart her in——"

"In that love?"

"In ambition!"

"What! does she want more than is showered upon her? Do you know what I have done for her?"

"It is enough that she is dissatisfied——"

"She is all but the queen! Am I not the first lord?"

"If she wishes to be wholly the queen?"

At this reply, the young man dropped his dagger, partly drawn, into its sheath with a snap and shuddered as if a whip had cut his face across.

"Let her be queen! Am I to die to let her be queen?"

"Would it kill you? Young hearts are elastic——"

"Under the surgeon's knife, perhaps; but in the living bosom?"

"It is a good test of true love not to be selfish!"

"Dog-philosopher! The devil lines his bed with such self-sacrifices! And you will lie in it before I make such sacrifices! I am in love. And in love like mine, there are no more a subject and a lord—but a man and his rival! For the prize we throw from the same box!"

"But the dice are unequal, my son!" said the magician, wheedling, beginning to respire, since the dagger had not been buried in his breast. "For a king they are loaded—with gold, not lead; but they are clogged against the lesser all the same!"

"You needle-fine fiend!"

He eyed him loathingly and yet with a kind of admiration. "But the love of gold obscured your vision, as the gold resplendence on that bird obscures mine! What else were you looking for when you went outside of your compact with me, your lord; who found you the passport to come over into this country when I little dreamed of your impious errand——"

"My errand, lord?"

"I am coming to that! I do not know what hazardous negotiations you have entered into with the evil spirits, but I do know that yours with the king will be to your disaster. Marrying Henry again! A man who repudiates when he does not behead! Call that a king! We lords do not throw the silks upon the mercer's hands after we have handled them!"

"I promised you, lord, my fealty for all that was of me, man, and of this world, but I cannot fight with the stars in their courses! When my own beacon blazes on high there, I must march straight to it, trampling what-not in my path. I heard a voice crying, 'Do it!'"

"Voice of your familiar—this Phoenix!" sneered Dereham. "It was not prudence! Will you learn nothing by the things happening in your time perchance if not while you were in England—the down-come of Cardinal-Count Wolsey and the decapitation of Norris?"

"My lord, I warned the former by letter—the latter by word of mouth, but he loved Ann Bullen, I suppose, as you do Catherine, and to you both those ends should be your warning—Wolsey, as the favorite and statesman, Norris as the lover of the woman on whom the king sets his choice!"

"Bullen threw herself at the king—Catherine was hidden up by the Rochforts and furthermore by me! Who bid you go hunt her out?"

"Science!"

"Science? Which does not tell you that you will die for crossing me!"

"No, but it tells me that Catherine will be Queen of England!"

Ethelwolf laughed deep and long. But it was not a pleasant laugh.

"If it tells you that, then, your science lies in every one of its myriad letters if writ is in the stars!"

"It is written!"

"Then there is a codicil which annuls all the preceding!"

The laugh was repeated so lustily that the hearer felt confounded.

"You can never bring about this marriage. You may smile, but I have you on the hip! You are wise, book in hand, but I shall throw you; you do not know your man!"

"I know both men: you and the king," replied the other, with much firmness, now that this was more a debate than a duel. "But I know the woman better than either. She is ambitious, not loving. But they are all aspiring like that—only, some reach for the crown celestial, the guerdon of true love, the domestic virtues and the faith and devotion to others. These are happy down here. The others seek the diadem earthy—they are never contented here—they must be gluttoned elsewhere!"

"You demean my Catherine!"

"I mean only to exalt her!"

"Not out of my reach, or without my leave!"

"Out of all reach—unless—" he bent over toward his interlocutor and whispered for his ear alone—"unless you become king! She is fated to be Queen of England, mind!"

"I—I?" returned Dereham, shrinking, for not an hour before he had measured his sovereign as one measures the man he is to cope with in a mortal tug. "This is England, not France," he said, solemnly, "where the first noble to murder his lord may wield his scepter!"

"I don't know your history well, but there was King Richard the Third——"

"Venomous tempter! He came to an end untimely; he was slain by a kingly hand!"

"A hand ducal before it was royal, but—it is the spirit that impels the sword—you!"

"You will fall as the flakes of snow off a garment when one enters the hall with the fire. You choose the least fixed of points for your venture to rest upon—a woman!"

"Ay, woman is frail, supple, yielding, but strong! The ancients, when they sought in their fable to set the supporters of the world, employed the serpent!"

"The serpent employs you, Fleming. You are lost! For the head you chose to wear the crown next—Catherine's, it is——"

"Your beloved?"

"More, you blind worm!"

"Your betrothed?"

"Dullard, she is my wife!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE LIVE FLY IN AMBER.

Fleming fell on his knees, bowing his head as to offer his neck to the death-stroke. He was assured that this was adamantine truth, inflexible, not to be palliated.

"Mercy, I am for the dead!"

"Yes, you can say your '*in manus!*' and not mumble long prayers as a monkey munches nuts. You are doubly doomed, do you see. You are in my halter, for I am lord of the Needington ruins and can deal justice for your conjuring on my lands against my wife's peace; and you are under my royal hangman's knife—since you cannot pretend to the nobleman's ax—as a prince of science!"

His scorn was scathing.

"Wizard, you have destroyed yourself like the most foolish among us, for do you not know the law promulgated after the execution of Ann Bullen and her lover Norris, to say nothing of the minstrel Smeaton, who played 'the devil's tattoo' once too often!"

Fleming writhed, and his clasped hands seemed welded together in the straining.

"Yes, I know the law Henry devised in his fury and dread of another deception so humiliating. He consulted all the legists to weave a tight net!"

"That decree drags you upon the same scaffold as the queen shown to be unworthy of the king. Ah, ha! you

promised the master for whom you betrayed me, your master, a fair and spotless maid! Catherine is young, fair and estimable—but do you believe there are judges in England, who, to pander to their king, would divorce a Dereham from his wife? The slayer of another Ann Bullen will not suffice, though he bring the sword of state to reinforce the headsman's, for they will have to cross blades with those of the earls and the barons! Catherine, Lady Dereham, is another sort of personage from the Catherine of the old barge house on the Thames!"

"Yes, sir!" said Fleming, rising and trying to cling to the peer's arm. "You are his favorite, and he will forgive you everything! But she is destined——"

"I am the man to step in between the lion and his prey; much quicker to defy the lightning which threatens my loved one!"

"His jaws may be locked—his nails may be pared!"

"Again do you hint at regicide? Would you hold Henry while I stab? Or shall I hold the lamp while you pour out the poison?"

"The poison!" stammered the magician, shaking.

"Well, admit that he pardons me marrying my love without asking his consent? That he lets my wife become mistress of honor to his sister the princess, and that he sends the Earl of Dereham in a high command to the battle front in Scotland! So far for me and Catherine! But as for you, there will be shorter work!"

"Oh, he will not forgive me for duping him, for selling the dove in another's cote! Oh, my good young lord, my favorite disciple, sue for me!"

"Pity for you, and grace, who by your pledge-breaking for your greed, have snapped short the honeymoon of my life! You have wilted a green hope! Do you beseech pity who have dragged a black veil over my brightly budding time, like the frost that kills the premature fruit buds? Who's going to show pity to me after this death of all dear to me? Your Phoenix may revive from its egg, but there is no revival for my blasted future!"

"Oh, help me!"

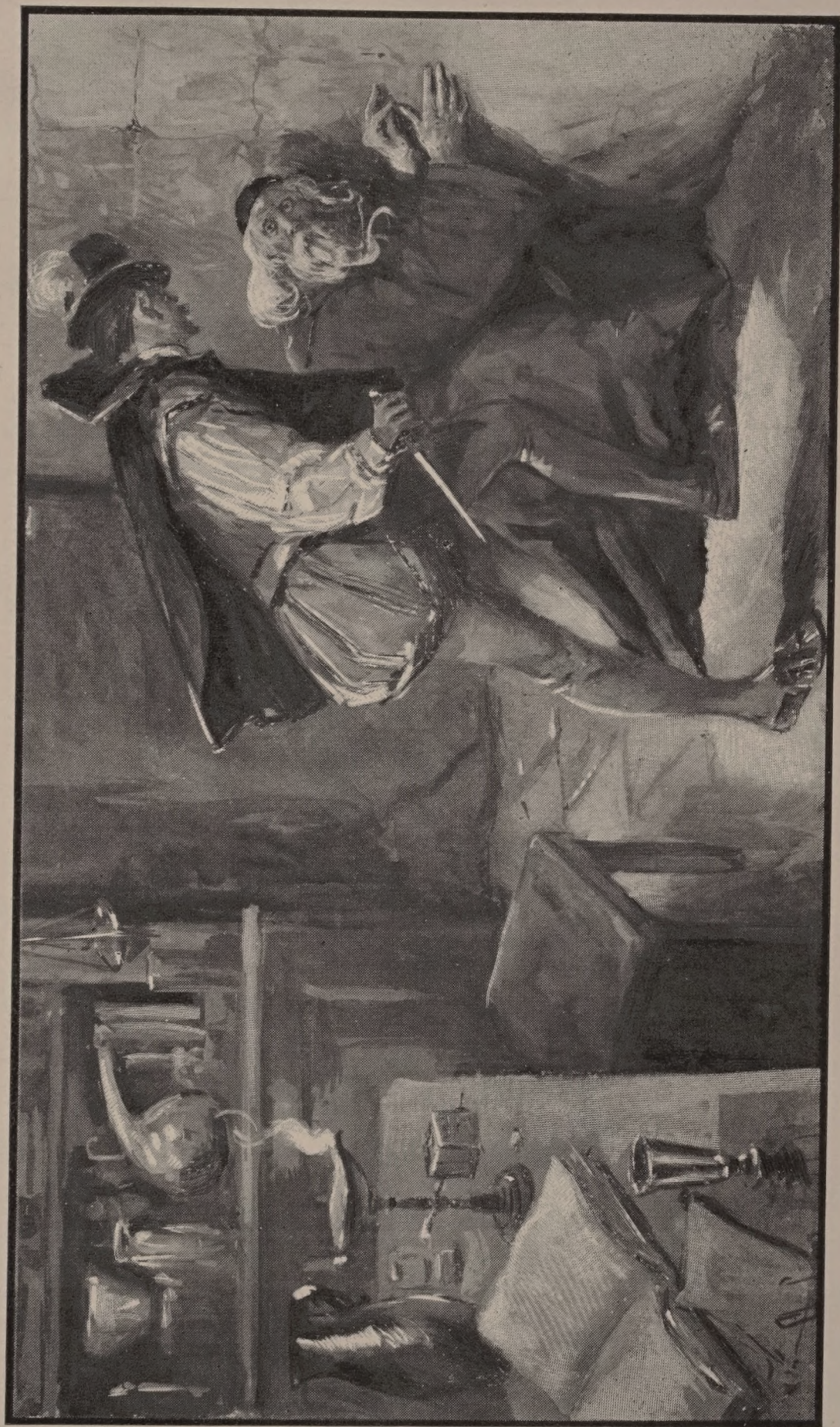
"Seek the help of——" He stamped as if to evoke the fiend of all fiends.

"Oh, you are fine of wit, lord! You have sense outvailing my wisdom! You know the court, the king, the craft, the bishop who has his ear—under his bluster is such hollowness! It is a painted and gilded lion! There must be a means of your preserving your wife, and I my poor life, which is so near being renewed!"

"Is it? Had you found gold you might redeem yourself for this selling the flame of a candle, which is in another's holding, for we are on the eve of a costly war, but your secret of renewing life will not save you from the vengeance of King Henry for murdering his love. Was it the same poison which ended Lady Jane Seymour's life that you would use against the king?"

"I—murder—poison—the Lady Jane!" faltered the other, pressed against the wall as though to embed himself in it.

"Oh, Dame Justice is lame, but she is tireless. When you stop to count your gains she overtakes you. Am I lord on the Privy Council, not to try out the papers, to



“Was it the same poison . . . you would use against the king?”

(See page 146)

serve my friends, and should I let pass the evidence in the case of the death of the poor queen? You are the grey man in the black vizard who called at Bell alley, and——”

“My lord, you do not know——”

“I know that Prince Edward’s mother died of the ‘wild bees’ honey,’ and that the poor boy sickens at the scent of honey to this day!”

“There was the mistake!”

“What, the child, not the mother, should have suffered? Tell that to the king, whose hopes are centered on a son!”

“My lord, it was a crisis then! Henry might have died of the gout. There were his two daughters, each with an army of subverters—with that lady, mother of a prince, there was a third and eliminating party in the field. It was thought best——”

“Horrible! This was some outlandish machination! No Englishman would connive at this! Oh, villain to apologize for this! Name your employers and die—to cheat the gibbet!”

Fleming opposed the dagger drawn, with his naked hand.

“But the child lives!”

“But the mother was murdered! As I said, you are doubly doomed.”

“But if you still keep that secret, and I keep yours——”

“You betrayed me once!”

“Never again, my lord, as there is——”

“No outlet but your death! You dead, Catherine shall not be found. You showed Henry but her image on a floor through a glass.

"But you should not leave England just when your prospects bud—just when Catherine touches the goal! There must be an outlet!"

"Peradventure," said the young man, gloomily, lowering his poniard.

"Venture, my lord! You are so daring."

"It is hazardous, desperate!"

"Say it, and try it."

"Thanks to your temptation, the king has charged me to seek out Catherine and bring her here."

"To him? Here?"

"Here, to-morrow! But the king must not see her face to face."

"Never, now, or we shall see the scowling stars no more! This eagerness shows that he loves her already—his first, his only, love! I foresaw it."

"Therefore, since the king's person is sacred to all, but the Scotch——" He paused and said, sarcastically: "Oh, if I were a Sir John Thirlstane! Since he must not die by this hand—since I am not disposed to die by any hand—she must die—by your hand!"

"Catherine die—by my hand!"

"It is only a woman, and what is woman compared with a man who, thanks to the secret of the Phoenix, is more than man, because he can be immortal!"

"It is true! But—why should she die, if by a cheat——"

"Now we have led you back upon your own ground, charlatan!" Dereham laughed, hoarsely. "Dissemble! Cheat the king with the semblance of death!"

"There are drugs——"

"Not to be tested upon my wife! No Phoenix eggs for my tricks upon the king. How if that Egyptian slept nine hours and awakened?"

"The Egyptian!" Fleming let a smile spread over his features, no longer drawn down by fear.

"I can do this—but rather, can I trust you with the operation?"

"If I do not imperil my soul."

"Tut! It is a question of composure. If, despite your love, you can be steady, we shall save—her!"

"That is enough. You and I are but pawns—she——"

"The queen!"

"You must be confident that you can gain my gratitude, to jest!"

"Over-confident!" and he laughed. "The king deserves this for trying to draw down the moon."

The magician went to a part of the wall which seemed the most solid, but at his touch a stone came out on a pivot, so as to disclose a cupboard. From the interior, perfectly dark, he drew with assurance a metal box containing apparently one of the watch clocks of the period. At least, a low whirring seemed to betray the imprisonment of a spring.

Dereham regarded him curiously. He set this case on a shelf, and all in the darkness of the evening, disclosed a clear yellow lump of what might be resin, but was amber. In the center, in a void, was a dark object of no particular shape that could be defined, since it was in excessive motion.

"A fly in amber," said the noble, contemptuously.

"Look again! Why does it vibrate and revolve so incredibly fast?"

Fleming's tone was of awe, and impressed his pupil.

The latter gazed and was fascinated as one is by the gyrations of the black speck on a bubble. Absolutely detached in the vacuum, keeping to the center of the natural area with unswerving fidelity, finding its balance as if posed on an invisible axis, and whirling with more than lightning speed, the mystery repelled while it fixed the attention. At the same time a light, without heat, a glow unlike that of deadwood, or of anything fiery that Dereham had ever seen, emanated from this oscillating atom and illumined their tensely drawn lineaments.

Dereham found that he could not withdraw from this sight.

"What is it makes that move so unceasingly?" asked he, in a low voice.

The minutest, as well as the grandest phenomena, have this quality of silencing the witnesses.

"If I knew that, I should be master of the world," replied the necromancer.

"I cannot tear away my gaze!" muttered the noble, angrily.

"Make the effort!" Dereham detached his eyes with an effort indeed.

"That is the test," said the magician, with some relish and pride. "You are fit to use this instrument."

"Instrument of what?"

"Talisman to save us all! You furnish the idea—to

cheat the king with death's semblance. I furnish the means—there it is. Go to Catherine as on the king's order. But let her fix her eyes on this imp in the amber. She cannot do what you have done—avert her captured gaze at her will. She will sink into sleep, from which nothing can wake her save at your will.”

“Is this true? Is this lawful? Is it Christian?” gasped the earl.

“Surely, it is human,” returned the master, merrily. “If it is the devil's contrivance, then it is a sorry devil that lets his weapons be turned on himself. Take it, use it, and when you shall have sent the poor Catherine into the slumber which will know no waking but at your bid, consult with me, if you weaken in your own conceptions.”

This jeering stung the young man. He took up the box, in which he shut the curious spinner, never ceasing to turn while they had looked, and just audibly sending out a sound because it had a resonant enclosure.

“I am trusting you, Fleming, with more than my life! Fail me not, and I—well, I had those papers of the examination of Bell alley poisoners conveyed to my own castle. Never will they be produced against you if you help me to save my poor Catherine. It is life for life!”

Fleming bowed and undid the door fastenings to let him out.

The tiny box seemed to sing to the heart that it rested lightly upon:

“I shall save her!”

“That's his sole thought! Well,” said the magician,

hopefully, "he loves her! To think that a man like me must rely on the love of a woman to defend my neck!"

He went up to the cage, and in the dark inspected the shapeless heap of feathers, not dull even in this gloom.

He took the so-called egg out of the recess and weighed it in his hand.

"I cut this out of that bird, and it will die without the means of recovering its life. It is its life I hold. If this life can repeat itself, as the bud makes such a tree as that it was carved from, then I am a made man! Out of the fire I shall emerge the superior of Pope and princes, for I shall live evermore!"

CHAPTER X.

“LOVE’S A MIGHTY LORD.”

Having now arranged with the conjurer what course might baffle the royal gallant in his new infatuation, Ethelwolf went direct to the cottage on his property where he had allowed his wife to remain following the private marriage. He believed that the nuptials were closely veiled; the officiator was his own chaplain, and he had the authority from a bishop who was at odds with the primate.

As for his servants, he had no doubt of their faithfulness.

When he came to the residence, certainly not befitting the bride of an Earl of Dereham, he found Dame Kennedy, over whom he had exercised a spell simply by having carried out his pledge to wed the parentless ward.

She let him pass, smiling, by the doorway. He entered without announcement or being welcomed.

Catherine was there, but more than ever absorbed in her dreams, and mechanically arranging her toilet and her excess of jewels.

When she did perceive him, for he kept quiet, absorbed at once in mingled admiration and the apprehension of one whose treasure was tempting to all the world, she looked up at him with no surprise. She tendered her lips to be kissed, and left her waist to his arm, with a lack of warmth which pained him.

"Do you think this is becoming?" said she.

No longer did she set flowers in her hair and around her neck, or as a breast knot—she could not lay aside the gems unless to replace one set by another.

"I should think more of your fairness if you retained among all those gewgaws one little token, that medallion with my miniature, which would prove that there is a spark of love amid all that coruscation of gratitude."

"Do you think I am fair?" reiterated she, heedless of his remarks, even to ignoring like an insult.

"You are my St. Mary the Fair!" returned he, throwing off his pique.

"Kennedy says that it is too much fairness for happiness."

"Pooh! you are having happiness, are you not?"

"So happy, the globe, hollowed out, would not brim over with my fullness. You should thank Heaven, sir, that it is so bountiful to you, and kiss me again."

"If I can find a spot free from cold gold and hard gems!" he sourly retorted.

He took her in his arms, but she returned nothing of the embrace, she was so listless.

"I see," said he, "why our neighbors, the Germans, call the honeymoon, as our old English had it, the 'flutter-month!'"

"Because time flits so rapidly?"

"It does not mean that at all, though it looks so, misleadingly. 'Flutter' is but 'glitter'—the marriage month is tinsel after all!" and he sighed.

"Lord of mine," said she, "pardon me. My pleasure is

marred by a foreboding!” He frowned, and took a chair near her, while she idly twisted and untwisted a fine grain gold chain. “I did not look up when you came in, though I was aware. I did not turn when you stood there, yet I was aware you were gazing on me. There is a quickening of my blood here.” She laid her hand on her heart.

“I startle you!”

“No, you depress me with your careworn mien! You keep on asking me if I am happy—while I know you are far from so. Keep your chair in state while I take my place at your feet on this stool for the page or tiring maid!” She took a humble position before him, but she was proud and haughty as if she were condescending. “This becomes the handmaid of a baron—a knight—a noble—a prince.” He winced at each enumeration. “How ought I accurately to address my lord?”

“To you I am Ethelwolf.”

“It is ancient; it stamps the holder as due to a former race preceding the Norman, but—in a word—never mind. How did you come so noiselessly?”

“Your woman is ever at the door.”

“Kennedy? Oh, you have bought her over! She sings your praises daily, hourly. But I did not hear your horse coming over the turf—your fine horse, Ralph, which shows by its pace, its grace and its highly-groomed coat that you are a great lord.”

“I left my mount at—at an inn, and walked through the underwood. I did not wish to attract attention! Never more have I wished to travel unseen.”

"You move like some one employed on a clandestine mission!"

"On the contrary—my errand is one which should be preceded by trumpet and kettle drum, covered with banners, and guarded by a mob tossing their caps and shouting their throats sore."

She could not understand.

"Then, for such stealthiness, you must have powerful motives!"

"Or powerful enemies!"

"Is it your love, your marriage, that has sharpened them, multiplied them—laid them closely at your heels?"

Yet it was more curiosity than concern which dictated her questions.

"Not yet has it come that I should hide myself—but I must hide you, my love, my other self!" He looked around him warily. If he had feared robbers to steal those jewels heaped on the table he could not have appeared more disturbed.

"If you yourself are in no danger, what matters the rest, as long as you love your wife?"

"Catherine," said he, leaning over to stroke her hair, "doubt your future, the persistency of this bright fortune, my truth, my standing in the country, in the realm, and your own creed and soul! Doubt there is a light of day here, brief, and a light of eternity hereafter, but never doubt this love of mine, for never since first a man loved the first woman was woman so loved by a man!"

"I forgive you, my darling, as you must forgive me, even beforehand, in case I should weaken and doubt."

“Look at me! I am all yours, to the last breath—to the last drop beating here! But still, Catherine, you have said that you do not love me!”

“I have said that? No, I have never said that!”

“You have—in your mind.”

“You cannot read my heart or my mind, and you have no right to say that!”

“I say it because we can never part, if you love me and I love you, yet I fear the parting.”

“Merciful saints! what parting? We have scarcely more than met! Parting in three weeks! three days—not more than some hours! Parting—what has gone wrong?”

“It’s the fate of peace—the perpetual reminder that fortune is fleeting and her wheel turns swiftly—more so than time’s hourglass.”

She trembled, for he seemed in suffering, a young and sturdy man! If he were to die, where would come more of these trinkets, dresses, luxuries and extravagances? She looked really grieved herself.

“It is over-strain!”

“Yes, your forehead reddens—it burns my hand—oh, you must be athirst!” She went to the sideboard and drew out a silver flagon, of which the arms had been scratched out so that she, though no adept, could not decipher the forms and learn whom she had wedded. He took advantage of this turning her back to slip the box with the restless thing in amber into a large case on her toilet table. To him the cunning atom, in suspense of the invisible fluid, sounded like a beetle impaled, but she heard nothing.

Bringing the cup and flagon to the table, she impatiently brushed off some lace upon the floor and poured him out a cupful. Her hand trembled and she spilt some drops on fine linen, which also she carelessly flung out of her way.

"Hebe, I thank you," said he, taking the drink. "But how wavering a hand for a cupbearer!"

"She would not do for the gods, would she?" said she, playfully.

"Nor for the king—hem! stay there, side by side, as we ought to live, walk, and—die!"

"How lugubrious you are!"

"What are you waiting and watching for?"

"Till the good wine cheers you! but you are only the more moody! Is there no way to liven my lord? Pest on the loneliness of it! No minstrels, no venders of ballads to stop at the door, no singing along the homeward way of the hinds leaving the fields! Dame Kennedy has a stock of songs, but, poor old lass, her voice is broken!"

"You can sing to me," said Ethelwolf, dreamily.

"In the olden time, when the counties had kings, and there were Ethelwolfs ruling Essex and Kent, there was one of their sons called Edgar——"

"Yes, there was a King Edgar, what time an Ethelwolf of my father's was Bishop of Winchester," said the listener.

"This king had a good heart, for he married a vassal of his, the fair Elfrida."

"Oh, do you know the lay of the King of Angle-land and the Fair Elfrida?" asked he.

“Who does not know it? Kennedy learned it, far to the north. But if you know it, why din your ears again with it? Oh, you men of state, who have traveled everywhere, seen everything, heard all the music!”

“No, it will have a fresh charm, sung by you. Sing to me, Catherine, that—or what you please.”

She sang placidly at first, but soon her eyes kindled maliciously and she resolved to bring out the point of the verse:

THE KING AND THE VASSAL MAID.

“Down in the goat sway winding, beneath a rocky site,
King Edgar spied the trothling all of forest-wight.
He hastened down the banket, and called out, ‘Hold! and take
My hand to cross the brooket, my sword to cleave the brake!’
‘Nay!’ quod she.

‘Not hand, or sword? Still, listen! How if you were allied,
Although a base-born peasant, unto a knight of pride?
Then all would hail you Lady! of one who’ll, all-time, love!
Then you could go a-hawking, gerfalcon on your glove!’
‘Nay!’ quod she.

“‘What, would you rise still higher? Be Baroness? What, say?
To dignity entitled, choice, in the court’s display?
Think of your stool, begilded, next to the regal throne—
Think of th’ emblazoned cushion, for you, and you alone!’
‘Nay!’ quod she.”

It was not entirely her notes that he heard, for in the box the nameless freak of nature tinkled constantly and insensibly mingled its vibrations with the singer’s. Her wish to occupy the foremost station and his tribulation conflicted.

"'You've but to hail me Master! The heart you have enflamed
Will for a brace of kisses lift you among the famed!
You'll wear a dazzling crownet——'"

He laid his hand on the case in which he had imprisoned the box.

——"where, at each jutting point,
A pearl of price will glitter, and gold will weld each joint!"
'Nay!' quod she.

"'True, there would yet be rivals—and none you're born to brook!
For the berries cut in ruby are yours, from your own Duke!
Duke, then, shall be your husband; the foremost peerest stand!
I see I shall be blessed—you reach to take my hand!'"

Indeed, Catherine, seeing that he had drawn the case into prominence on the board, involuntarily put out her hand toward it.

"'Nay!' quod she!" she repeated, however, with a humorous smile.

"'The last throw! Will you Queen it? Say so, for I'm the King!'"

He sprang up, thrilled by he knew not what sensation, and she, by the shudder over her neck, seemed also permeated by the mystic emanation from that captive in the box. Her eyes fastened on the cover as if she knew there was an answer to her chief question. But her voice ceased and, unconsciously, Ethelwolf took up the part, making the solo a duet in which each bore his or her part:

"'King! who can trace around you grander than magic ring!
Ha! you should sway the scepter, and not the crook, I wis!
You leap to be my Esther, and give me lasting bliss!'"

Catherine advanced to the table and laid her hand on

his, which, in turn, was opening the case. She sang cheerily, with her eyes brighter than any of the cut stones :

“‘Yea, yea, yea!’ quod she!”

She repulsed his entreaty, mute but imperative, to sink into his arms.

The lid flew open ; her eyes were immediately fixed upon the ever-revolving mite, whirling with fevered action like a humming bird trying to release itself from being caught on a thorn. From that instant she lost knowledge of all else, even to the experimentalist in this precedent of hypnotism.

Her expression was that blending of abhorrence and irresistible attraction of the child, plucking flowers, surprised into staring at a viper. He dared not interfere—his hand was paralyzed so that he could not stretch it out to close the box. He could only participate in the spell so as to look on and listen.

By her broken speech he could trace the progress of the singular coma.

“What is this? What creation of deviltry is this? Why does it make one giddy with this tiresome, tireless spinning? Have you left me? Was it you threw the icy water over me—no, the boiling water over me? I stifle!” She tore off a necklace, breaking the string, and the pearls rattled like hail as they bestrewed the floor.

“Mercy, Ethelwolf, let me detach my sight from—is it a living thing—or a monstrous engine to drive me distracted? I feel a thousand feelings throng upon me—my heart will burst, my brain dis sever its union with guiding

impulse! Kennedy! My husband! Love—take away the bauble, thou giver of tranquil life, and remove that lustrous, agitated perturber! Oh, close my eyes, take away sight—let me be blind rather than endure this torment! Peace to my eyes, peace to my soul, which it is beginning to unhinge!"

He closed the lid. But the relief was impossible. She still suffered the influence; she stared—it was plain that ever in her eyes that incessant fluctuation of the mite haunted her. Then her breathing, spasmodic, became gradually shorter and fainter. He took her in his arms and bore her to the settee. He laid her on the hassocks gently as if, since stiffening, she had become brittle and might break. Rigidity stole over her. He began to experience a fear unknown to him. He never had quailed when he might die, but to have her dead like this was unspeakable woe.

He called to her, but she was deaf. He closed her eyelids, which submitted as if made of lead. He could not bear the fixed gaze.

Rising, he stood by what had become, to all appearance, a corpse.

He sprang back to the box, and, without opening it, such was his awe at its power, let the faint sound confirm his belief that its motion was unbounded.

"Has it done more than the work Fleming promised of it?" he muttered. "Oh, if he has killed her! I shall care just to live till I denounce him to the judges to answer for his previous murder of the young and innocent! But

no—this is a seeming death!” added he, taking a last review of his loved one.

“It was the only course! If I save her—well and good! If she is dead—then I am the last of the Derehams!”

Slowly he went to the door and called in a sonorous voice:

“Hither, Dame Kennedy! and all you, laying out in the copse awatch! Come in and lay out the dead! Your mistress is dead!”

He thrust the petty instrument in this unearthly result within his doublet. None but he could hear the whizzing, but to him it was louder than his own heart-beats.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ETERNAL FAREWELL.

The parish doctor had no sooner tested the insensible state of Catherine than he pronounced her beyond the reach of skill and science.

As the lord would not let out the secret of the marriage, it was considered that her birth, though not published, allowed her being deposited in the family vault of South Dereham Church.

To this place, showing all those brasses, monuments, and a fresco of the "Last Judgment," which were its striking beauties before the Cromwellite troopers demolished and ravaged, the supposed remains were borne by a number of the girls of the village and estate.

As this crypt was a chapel, and the services were performed here by the same divine who had wedded her at midnight. So his voice was pregnant with feeling as he read the service, knowing alone that she was a wife, and his lord's, too.

Nevertheless, he did not make any remonstrance to the children coming down and strewing the bier with white flowers.

"*Felix culpa!*" said he, "blessed blunder! She will not repose the less lightly because of the flowers being blanced. Besides, sweet odors are the prayers of the saints—it is written so in Chrysostom."

He set the example of bedewing the bier with holy water cast off a hollywood sprinkler, a return to ancient rites which no one questioned.

Ethelwolf, sitting on one of the *sedilia*, that is, stone seats expressly placed in the funereal vault for the meditative who feared not such a retreat for mourning, seemed buried in grief. In reality, shocked by the medical man being so easily deceived, having heard no tokens of his cheat being even imagined, he dreaded that while Fleming's singular mechanical soporific was efficacious his power to revoke its action was futile. But doubt is the beacon of the wise; he felt his hope never thoroughly dissipated.

Kennedy's grief had unnerved him. She, so hard and impassible, wept and raved like a mother over the loss of her first-born.

She called on the poor child to forgive her for harshness in her thralldom, for rough words and careless replies to her rhapsodies.

Dereham felt his heart plucked up by the roots as these wails rent the stagnant air. He motioned with his hand for her to be removed, for, with his dormant power to revive the creature so profoundly regretted, these sobs were each a wounding blow.

One of the little children, less in awe of the lord of the manor than the others, was the last to leave the vault. She threw a handful of water-lilies upon the coffin, and said in a sweet, low voice, which Dereham heard more distinctly than louder noises:

"Sleep in peace, our darling elder sister! for you were

too good for this life. The good angels above saw that there was one playmate lacking in their groups, and they called upon you to join them. Now your spirit is soaring above us, and you are wearing a golden crown."

The earl wrung his clasped hands at this.

"Yes," murmured he, "all her wish was to sit as a queen and see no sorrow."

"Enjoy forever your fadeless glory," continued the child, while the priest who had taught her the little address nodded approval, seeing that his patron was interested, "and as you loved us here, protect us from on high."

When all had gone, and the lord heard the children, forgetting the sad act, ramble over the yard and strike up a light air very different from the hymns, he shuddered, rose, and went over to the splendid old ewer of rock crystal which held the holy water; he took the sprinkler of branches and also scattered the drops upon the bier, draped with velvet like a peeress' mantle.

He looked around; the door had closed, leaving him alone.

"Fleming was right about that witching *lulus natura*. This trance is like death! If it were not mine own work, through that unintelligible medium, I should be deceived by the likeness. After all, frailty of human existence! If I were stricken down by a dead bough, by a trip over a scythe left in the rank grass, by a sinking in the quicksand, I who alone know the secret-releasing word—Catherine would die for sure! Where is the spirit now which rejoiced in those smoothed eyes, which made her voice music, and gave buoyancy to the inert frame! How far

have I banished it—does it still cling to that cold casing? How is it gazing on that spin-wheel; it was benumbed, and, like the bear and the house-swallows, hybernates until the spring comes! And I can recall it? Oh, if I doubted that, I would die here and straightway join my fathers!”

He looked around proudly at the line of memorials which told the progress of the Derehams during five centuries: Saxon monoliths, Templar knights’ effigies, tombs, stones, ancient crosses, bright brass, fresh cut stone, with tattered bannerets overhead and rusting weapons. Then he became sad again.

“An irremovable glance at a tremulous, luminous point,” he marveled, with his eyes on the white figure on the bier within the masonry recess, “and the animation was frozen. What a lethargy, longer than sleep and shorter than death! Is it cemented in there, in the hollow of the heart, or flitting to and fro in immensity? Is it like the flame of that everlasting sepulchral lamp? Can I blow it into ignition though it has died almost to extinction? When it returns, at my bidding, will it come into its own again, like an exiled queen reinhabiting her palace, ready to forgive or to chastise him who sent her into that mortal banishment? Will Catherine have a tale to tell which will darken all the future with its terrors? Or will she have seen such splendor that evermore the world will look as through smoke!”

He approached; the countenance was like marble, but no statue resembles flesh. She looked more than tranquil—she seemed happy. After her brief gleam of sunshine,

after being a noble bride for a month, hers was the peace of one fully sated.

"She will not have that insatiate ambition when she sees me anew!" he hopefully said.

Yet what was he going to awaken her to see? He viewed what was coming so shrinkingly that he wished the fates would clip his thread and that he could lay himself down for a similar rest beside her in that vault. They had not lived long side by side, but so he prayed in that sanctuary for them to die.

When he rose, it was with his hands raised as if he felt the slab laid over his head and hers.

"Fickle and briary world, must we renew, hand in hand, our endeavors to struggle through it? Calamity or blessing? Will she bless me or curse me on her awakening? Or, in the future, which I cannot surely promise her? There is no certainty under our tyrant but these graves! Am I to wait for a fresh one to be opened at my feet, when I might leap into one of these?"

He kissed her brow, and it was neither cold nor warm; it had no blood coursing, but it was not clayey white. He almost believed that the contact made her shiver. Did his voice not go down into the depth where her life had retired, longing to be summoned? He threw off all caution.

"Oh, Catherine," he moaned, "come back to me out of that domain of annihilation! I feel more than mortal man that I have the sway over your vitality; that I can draw you here for ill or good, for grief or gladness! Anything for us if we share dear life!"

He must have had the will power which the magician

affirmed to be lodged in him, for this time she thrilled. A transient flush covered all that whiteness, but was gone like a blood drop from a thorn-prick fallen into a spring. There, spread, gone!

“Joy!”

But a doleful, harsh sound smote him; the iron gates of the chapel yard were moving.

“Hark!” he sprang to his feet, quivering with vexation.

It was not joy, but misery, if he were discovered here, and the supposed dead revived, all his schemes were annulled.

“Sleep again, and soundly!” hissed he to the corpse.

But who could come here, the abode of the departed, which all simple and blithe souls shunned? He strode toward the steps, for, only know, he blamed himself for not having closed the door at the head behind the mourners. Still, there was no number of footsteps out there. He ran up and peeped through the interstice of the door left on the jar. Then his heart leaped and came down like a bullet; he felt a cold which the sepulchre had not imparted. He had recognized that burly man whose tread almost made the sod quake—his royal master. He left the door untouched and retreated down, muttering:

“Henry! Here!”

He hastened with silenced steps to the bier, and repeated the injunction for the stupor not to break.

“Hasty fool, to bid her wake!” he growled. “Power of insensibility, retain your weighty pressure on those quivering lids, and let them never open from their iron-bound clasp unless it is to see her husband, alone!”

Meanwhile the intruder in the churchyard had reached the chapel door. He pushed it with a kind of dread lest something within should resist or oppose him on his entrance.

Dereham saw him pause at the stair-head, looming up formidably.

"It is he! What doth he here, where is written the line: '*Debel lare superbos!*' (down with the proud). If he slipped on those stones I would not unlock my elbow joint to break the fall!"

"Dereham! Ethelwolf!—is not the lord here?" said Henry, in a voice strangely hushed for him who rarely used abated breath.

"I am here!" said the earl, but staying by the post of deathwatch, stubbornly.

But, on the visitor to the temple of the dead reaching the bottom of the flight, and becoming used to the crypt lamp, the younger man slowly left his place and offered his arm. Henry leaned on him, a token of favor, but here, in the solitude, a proof that he needed both moral and physical support.

"I received the incredible tidings that the woman was snatched away from my faithful messenger by death, so interrupting your mission. Is it here they brought her?"

"She is over there," pointing to the bench on which the bier was set, preliminary to the transfer into the open vaulted shelf.

"It looks as if she slept!" said Henry, in a muffled voice.

"Yes, she sleeps. Sleep on, Catherine," said he, but to himself.

"I thank you, lord, for having given her shelter in your chapel. This is a last home worthy of a Howard, as we made her out to be. Ah, when adversity comes and leaves us alone a friend like you is an inestimable boon." He embraced him, Dereham not returning the *acclade*, but remaining insensible, as though the chill of the charnel house froze him.

"But I give you my plight that she shall not long intrude among your saints and heroes. Before a week she shall rest, not to be disturbed again, at Westminster——"

"In the Abbey!" said Dereham, with horrified rebuke.

"I honor in her what she was intended to be."

"How intended? Has not her premature death foiled the assurance of the lying astrologer that she was destined——"

"Spite of all, she will ever be, though dead, the object of my adoration, respect and adulation."

"What a root the beauty struck!" thought the earl. "Ah, will not my master passion check this master's passion? How is it I see your grace here, and unattended?" he demanded, almost wrathfully.

The king answered with unheard-of meekness:

"I wished to see her once more before the catafalque comprised her and the stone was rolled over in the Abbey. When your courier reported that you had found poor Catherine dead, and could but render her the last honors, and not such as I directed to be lavished upon her, I would not, could not, believe the black news. You will

understand me, you, Ethelwolf, though I would stand unflinchingly before my throne flung down, the word of that girl's death made my heart swell and these eyes of mine, dried-up wells, overflowed as not since Jane Seymour was likewise hurried away. Are nothing but tombs to mark my domestic path? Yes, I was driven by an impulse more despotic than any of mine to behold that statuesque being once more, whose semblance should be copied by art that posterity might see what once was a flash of heaven upon my reign. My friend, it is dark here, but I plainly see that you sympathize with me, and that endears you more. '*Non ignare mali!*' as the mourning queen of old said—you, too, have known what sorrows are, though you are so young compared with me."

Dereham shook himself free as if he could not bear the touch. He went and took up the lamp, which he carried to the bier. He set it on a scone for that purpose, of which the brazen reflector sent a beam all along the unconscious Catherine. He pulled down the winding sheet off the head; he swept aside the stray lily flowers. He drew his dagger, trimmed the wick with it, and with it pointed to the head illumined with a green tinge and like a sepulchral figure. The shadow was in the sockets and under the chin; the effect was unearthly, and Henry could distinguish nothing to suggest that life lingered.

"Look upon that, sire!" said Dereham, as if he were an avenger indicating the victim to a slayer.

"Dead!" said the king, three times. His gaze became fixed. "Ah me, I must have offended the Giver of Life!" He bowed as if in prayer.

"Yes," grimly said the earl, and with irony, "does it not look as if we were in a tribunal and the judges regarded you and I, 'the cadaver being present,' as if you or I were guilty of this homicide?"

"A star was rising over England and me," said Henry, without having heard the jeer, "presaging ineffable bliss. But the north wind sprang up and passed over its shining face, and lo! our delight was not! Perhaps this woman would have made me more just and better, for such brightness would have dispelled my soul darkness. Wretched human power, so mighty to destroy, so paltry to restore human life!"

"Yes, there is no king who can make that inert form rise and smile again!" said Dereham, with an incomprehensible taunting accent, for it was clear that Fleming had not dared to reveal aught to his patron.

"No king—no man, unless my magician——"

"Sire, in Heaven's name do not profane my ancestral sanctuary with that infidel who dabbles in deviltry!"

"Pshaw! what avails his arts? What avails my being the Eighth Henry, a king of England, as great as Francis of France and as rich as Charles of the Empire? I can send a fleet to one end of the world, and an army to the other! I have only to beat with my lance butt on my London gates to have a nation leap up in battle array; but how feeble is all this before a squared hole encased in marble! The battle-ax is broken against the goodman delver's spade! I can load the highest with chains, and I cannot relieve this woman of the icy links of death!"

He seized one of the dangling hands and bowed over

it. He offered his neck to the dagger, but Dereham would not strike even him, with back turned.

“Royal hands!” gibed he, “royal incapacity! I cannot straighten out one of these little fingers—I cannot warm a drop of this congealed blood.”

“It is well you cannot,” thought the earl, “for, if they warmed, God save Prince Edward! He would be proclaimed king to-morrow!”

“Catherine, my spouse!”

“Your spouse!” echoed Dereham, letting the poinard fall; it rang on the stones, but neither heard it, so intent were they each on his unique thought.

Henry drew that ring from his finger which was the convincing evidence of his mighty will; with that, Dereham could have slain the archbishop at the high mass, and, showing that, hold up his absolution. The king with difficulty, till the finger relaxed, to Dereham’s affright, pushed it slowly around the joints.

“At least, in the grave, wear this band which you could not display to the host upon my throne!” said he. “Ah, would it were the ransom to redeem your captive, oh, my dread brother, King Death! What is your price that Harry of England can pay, for a year’s breath—a month’s breath, to revive this petrification?”

The only witness held his breath as if it might revive the woman too soon.

A horrid carrion fly, black as jet, had fluttered about, and now fell on the lamp, where, having immersed itself in the oil, it formed an addition to the wick and redoubled the flame. By this spitting and flickering excess a kind

of movement was given to all things; the rags of war flags waved, the statues nodded and leaned forward; the shroud fluttered its folds, the figure seemed no more utterly dead.

"If her lifeblood is flowing," muttered the lord, "then may his ebb!"

"Heavenly justice," said the king, kneeling as to a shrine, "hast thou two balances in which to weigh the destiny of sovereign and subject? Can the angel of the bottomless pit go into the palace as into the cot and rive away the good and gentle as well as the grand and terrible? Cannot the royal knee bending, as you see; cannot the crowned head, lowering; cannot the proud voice beg—can nothing of us elect obtain more than the vile herdsman in his hovel—where his beloved lies, like this! Ah, when of yore the bereaved came to Thee, O Lord, and when the captains, merchants, simple peasant mothers besought Thee to revive their dead, Thou turnest not a deaf ear! Here, in Thy holy fane, the king implores to hear the gladsome word: 'Rise!'"

"Sire, do not linger here!" interrupted Dereham, trembling with apprehension, for it seemed to him that Catherine stirred. "Such regrets, such appeals, are profanation! Such words are raillery, and only tempt Providence!"

He helped the king to his feet—in his excitement he almost dragged him up. He stood between him and the bier.

"Am I to leave?" stammered the king, like an old man suddenly helpless; "am I to quit here? No, I cannot tear myself from where she is!"

“Sire, sire!” continued Dereham, in a frenzy, keeping himself a living screen between the royal eyes and that attraction, “let this newly dead rest, or those who died all along the ages will spring out and drive us hence for intruding on their repose. Come, come!”

And exerting a strength impossible to resist, he urged the other perforce to go up the steps and through the door.

CHAPTER XII.

QUIT NOT CERTAINTY FOR HOPE.

The lamp had recovered from burning the fly, and with its flame perfectly steady and upright, the stillness was also complete in the vault.

Presently a sigh intelligible stole out from the bier and ascended to the shadowy barrel-roof.

"God's blest Mother!" came from Catherine's lips.

On regaining consciousness it came with singular feeling; she was averse to being moved and to move, but superior power bade her stir, stretch and relax her muscles. She sat up and shook off a more than leaden sleep, for it had none of the characteristics of a narcotic. Her eyes were open, but for a time she did not see the lamp with understanding what it was. Her chief sensation was of cold.

Her forehead was compressed, and, though she rubbed it, it felt as if a crown encircled it. Her hands dislodged a wreath of flowers.

"Did I lay me down with those trumpery roses, which Kennedy may have gathered, about my neck? Kennedy!" she called several times, but the peculiar dull beating back of her voice alarmed her.

"Ethelwolf!" she called, soon again, with a firm belief that, if he came, she need not be distressed.

At last, she saw the lamp. She thought that it was a

star shining in out of the dark, and it had so awakened her. Then she recalled that, going to look at a fresh trinket in her presents, heaped up on the toilet table, one bright spot had drawn her monopolizingly to gaze at it. She had fallen off into senselessness while so gazing.

But this lamp, of an odd shape, dark bronze, with too steady a greenish flame, and its place on a metal platter, with a reflecting disc behind it——

“Oh,” screamed she; “it—it is——”

But she feared to tell what she saw confining her. She shut her eyes, and lay down again, but instantly the coldness of her pillow, green rushes under a cloth, repelled her.

But a grisly terror disgusted her; she found courage to sit up, to slide off the bier, not without turning it; she staggered, but held up by a lectern, which tilted, and there fell a prayer-book.

Dimly, she recognized some of the features, which told her it was a holy structure.

She walked like one taken off a rack and almost dislocated.

She ran against the lowermost of the stone steps. Her hand, groping, met the granite wall, dripping with damp.

She had lived on the barge; she had lived in the cottage—but never had she felt stone walls around her.

Entangled in her winding sheet, dragged with her, she suddenly had enlightenment come.

“I am among the dead!” said she, in the voice we use when afraid what we say is true.

She flung the shroud from her in disgust,

“My blessed patron saint and her wheel between me and evil! Where am I?”

Her stupor held her as in chains at finding she was in the funeral vault, in the very midst of the dead. What if they were to lift those slabs under her feet, push open the doors banded with iron, step out of those niches? Nothing but the lamp, burning so pitilessly, steadily, like the northern star, when one sinks in the perpetually rising drift and looks up to the snowy heaven for respite. She could believe she was embedded in the earth.

Her eyes, inured by this to the gloom, discerned one of the statues which happened—for most were uncouth and grotesque—to be angelic; it seemed poised on one foot, as if its wings could lift it.

She held out her arms to it, and prayed that the enemy should not follow her and prevail.

But, since nothing moved toward her—she heard nothing to appall her farther—she began to reflect.

How could she be here?

A bride—a mistress over a little cottage, but sure that her mate was a great and rich man—how could she have been made to exchange her couch, elegant and luxurious, for this stony bed?

Such was the calm that she forbade her timorous soul to be daunted, vexed, and go mad.

She tried to remember what had occurred before this odd inclusion of her among the ashes.

Yes, Ethelwolf had come and caught her decking herself, certainly, for the gala, not the funeral. There was

nothing before she forgot all but the strange jewel of preternatural luster at which she had stared in its box.

She must have sunk into his arms, and he had thought her dead. Thinking her dead, she had been dressed for the grave, and here she had been immured.

Here! Where?

Something glittered on the floor; a dagger. She took it up. Had she known the peerage and heraldry, perhaps she would have defined from the carved hilt that it had belonged to the Earl of Dereham. She knew that was a coronet, that is all. Against the only foes she could expect to assail her here, the blade was vain, but the cross was more potent. Armed with this, she renewed her courage.

There were no windows in this crypt—only airholes. She had come again to the steps.

They would not think that idlers would wander in here—no more than that a locked door would keep the disembodied in! She mounted the steps, but the door was firm; Dereham, to prevent his master retracing his track, had fastened it. Desperate, she tried to cleave the bolt with her dagger, but it resisted. She was forced to stand on the landing, and ponder on her strait.

But it was a ghastly view up there; the one ray of comfort, where it was so comfortless, was the lamp. She returned to where it was set, and, thrusting the dagger into her girdle, folded her hands in prayer.

“Mercy on me!” she implored. “Oh, I will be the slave of him who releases me from this worst of all dungeons!”

At the first opportunity, Ethelwolf had let the king discharge him from attendance. He hurried back to the chapel. He unlocked the door, and, at the first glimpse, spied the bier overturned. He raced down, and was horrified at the sheet trailing on the stones, without vestige of the occupant.

"Fury!" ejaculated he. "Did he raise the devil, and have we lost her?" But, recalling himself, he added, scolding: "It is not such as Catherine as are prey to Beelzebub."

But Catherine was gone! He called out and more loudly.

"I am here!" cried she; and, with one leap, she was by his side.

In her uncontainable ecstasy, she enfolded him with her arms; she kissed him, frantically, and sobbed with laughter dreadful to hear, the delight was so strained.

"Joy, darling, my husband! Ethelwolf, you are here! I am saved!"

"In truth, you are saved!"

"What has happened?"

"That you were dead, but that you are alive! Be sure that this is life! But it must be for me alone!"

"Yes, for you alone! But let us go forth, since you have the means to enter and leave! I gasp for air—the open air—to breathe!"

He wrapped his cloak around her. But the king's men, although he had departed, were waiting to hear his friend's orders about this woman, whom their master had loved and wished to have interred in the royal chapel.

"I beg a few minutes for the sake of our love! It has escaped a tremendous danger!"

"And I!" She did not know well what she was saying, as she clung to him heavily. "It is well, all you say!" She was suffering lest he quitted her. "Never again leave me! How did you know that you should find me here? For I was lying in one of those stone chests, I think. What place is this?"

"The family vault of my forefathers."

"Yes, you have the right to be here; but how came you to me so timely, running as to a goal—like my good angel to restore me to the sweet earth, the blessed sunshine, and to save more than my life—my senses?"

"To restore you for our happiness!"

"Yes, yes, for happiness!" said she, mechanically.

"I will tell you all, for the time has come for me to have no more secrets from my one best beloved! And it is the place for truth. In the presence of the dead one does not lie!"

"Oh, am I to know what you are?"

"Yes; and I can the more proudly avow it as these ancestors never heard any voice reproach them for fault, or sin, or crime! Look on those names, chased in brass or cut in stone; they are gems on the pages of England's story—those are earls of Dereham!"

"Dereham! You are an earl—a duke?"

"Peer of the realm, my Catherine!"

"You must be among the foremost!"

"I am the foremost! It is the king alone who takes a

step before me. He is, plainly, our elder brother—for we peers are his brothers! The least of us his cousins!”

“Cousin to the king? Then I share in this—in these honors, prizes, position, fortune?”

“When I gave you my heart, did not all of mine go with it? On them all, and for them all to be your enjoyment, I am ready to offer my life!” He made a gesture, for his illustrious foregoers to witness this vow.

Catherine had forgotten where she stood. With as much placidity as though she were in her previous abode, she asked, eagerly, on this point only: “This means that I am going to court?”

“Listen,” said he, evasively. “I—you——”

“I shall be in the court—I shall be presented to the king, to the princess, to the——”

“Listen!” and he frowned at this fixed idea of hers, which irritated him like a rankling thorn, burying itself deeper and more deep in the minute wound. “Before you are presented to King Henry, you ought to know something of him, of his fell passions, sanguinary, self-licensed——”

“The songs, the tales—something came to me through my nurse’s tattle of him——”

“Well, I know him as the ballad-mongers do not—I know him in earnest, not in jest! No sooner did I find you, lovely among women, a cynosure, and I fell into love with you, than dread shot into the race, and thereafter accompanied love in his chase. I thought all the time of the royal lion—that is, glutton! And I trembled at the bare notion of your dwelling so near the palace—den

of the tyrant greed! Nothing is sacred to him! He would tread this hallowed dust in pursuit of a chance object! His breath tarnishes the most exalted lady's fame! Therefore, I held back from him my love, as I did from you the publishing of my quality and proximity to the crown. I fear that some rashness, some hastiness of yours might cross my happiness, based wholly upon you. Thus passed my felicity troubled by that impending Sirocco of the burning and thirsty deserts. I could see you only at periods, for in the main my time had to be yielded up to the jealous, all-desiring master. To account for my change—for I had become steadfast, who was varying; moody, who was merry, and, withal, absent, who was prompt with quip and repartee, and quite the meddler in every man's suit—I feigned that I dared not—I, overbold, set my cap at the Princess Margaret——”

“Oh, you, coupled with the princess—the king's own sister?”

“You have it. But it was you who occupied all my heart and soul!”

“A princess my defeated rival?” murmured Catherine, with sparkling eyes.

“In the court as in the woodland, in cot or in the gardens, your memory quitted me never for an instant!”

“I knew that well, darling; but you gave me no reasons then.”

“Well, there was reason, and to spare; all that I foresaw has come in its fullness! The king——”

“Yes, the king?” with a world of meaning in her short question.

“He—he has seen you!”

The depth of woe in his tone was equaled in intensity by the depth of thankfulness in her aspect.

“I have been seen by the king?” then incredulous, like one doubting an unexpected though desired godsend, she uttered: “I, so secluded, so jealously guarded by a husband, who was also a lover!”

“He saw you as one sees something in a mirror. By a magical contrivance. But it must be as if he had not had even that similitude. Therefore, you must follow me. From that moment, we were lost, unless I found evasion.

“Well, a skillful wizard supplied me with the occult and remarkable means of deceiving whom you will that judges of life and death. He gave me the instrument to imitate death in life!”

“Ah, that overpowering sleep—the little, bright and throbbing point! I think it sears my brain again!” She covered her eyes.

“Yes, that was it! It had an irresistible and swift effect. I presented this talisman to your sight, and, looking, you were enthralled.”

“Oh, it was you did this—you gave me to death, and you let the undertakers bring me here among the dead!” Her lips paled and curled with loathing.

“But you were unaware, and the process gave me, looking on, more pain than you!”

“My pain was when I awoke here, alone. Then, you thus put up, as screen against the king seeing me in reality, that winding sheet—you cased me in the coffin to prevent him seeing me?”

"I had you immured here, until I came to release you, because the king sent his most trusty agent to convey you out of your husband's home to the palace."

"His agent came to convey me to his palace while I slept?"

"That is so."

"The king wished to see me, eye to eye."

"Well, first you were to be presented to his sister."

"Princess Margaret?"

"The Princess Margaret, who would be prevailed upon to receive you as a maid-of-honor."

"Honorary servant of a royal princess!" repeated the young wife, without pride or hurt esteem.

"Yes, you, just a ward of the king, a stray creature without parentage or family mark, you were, by the stroke of some hired pen and a daub of wax impressed with the royal signet, converted into a Howard! Lord Norfolk, who would die a hundred deaths rather than turn his back to the enemy, bowed to the father of lies, and acknowledged this Catherine to be of his blood!"

"A Howard! Catherine Howard!" said she, dwelling with unction on the name, as a child on a sugar plum. "I am Catherine Howard?"

"But, before that forgery, you became a Dereham! Remember that above all!" cried the earl, haughtily. "But Catherine, called Howard, was found dead in her bed, in her cottage; her faithful nurse broke her heart on finding that so, and all believe that she is in her latest sleep."

"All?"

"All but I!"

“And the king?”

Dereham smiled, coldly and firmly.

“He above all, for it was essential that he should believe that.”

“But a king is so often deceived in things touching him nearly—a king would doubt so fortuitous a bar to his passion.”

“He did doubt, but, what might have ruined us, has saved us.”

“May I know how?”

“While I stood there, by your tomb, waiting for your first sign which, at my will, I could induce, who should intrude where no one ventures as the night falls, but the king.” She stared around her, only hoping to see that one figure. “Mistrustful of his dearest friend——”

“For cause!” said she, incisively.

“Well, yes, this time, for cause! He came to that door!”

She glanced up the steps, as though she expected to see Henry standing there.

“Coming down those steps, he went over there, where I awaited, dagger in hand.”

“Why a dagger? A dagger drawn on the king? You must love me, Ethelwolf, more than your liberty, your life, your estate, your title—more than——”

“I love you as husband loves his wife—no more, no less. It is entire or worthless. The hand that touches an Englishman’s wife—it should be lopped off! Had I been a judge, and Shore, the goldsmith, been brought before me for slaying Edward, I should have *assoiled* him,

given my purse, my horse, my servingmen to fight with him, away into sanctuary! As for this instance, verily, I maintain that if you had breathed in his watch, I should have made that first sign your last!"

She liberated herself from his arms. She could stand alone and undaunted now—what she had heard galvanized her.

"You would have killed your king, my lord?"

"With the same steel that killed my lady—any one, rather than lose my darling! Those effigies around us were of men of iron, Derehams the During! But all helped me—you remained dead, though I had spoken the awakening word—your finger was an icicle over which he dared to draw that ring——"

"Ring! A ring on my hand—it is true! An engagement ring—on the heart finger! A royal ring?"

She would have pressed her lips on it, but, without meaning, the earl had picked up his dagger and restored it to its sheath.

"Yes, your hand remained irresponsive to the touch, as it had to mine! Vainly, his voice called upon you! Nothing within you replied to his wail, lamentable, perhaps, beyond any that have ineffectually reverberated under this canopy! His adulterous lips uselessly polluted your hand; it remains as pure as pale! He took away with him no doubt, no consolation—and little dreamed that he might have been carried out to Westminster with this bodkin driven into his black heart!"

"A ring of troth! I am his bride, then?"

"Oh, no; mine first, then that of Death! Look around

you! To each Dereham, his wife! Ah, they were tempted, and by monarchs, too—it is in our chronicles—but they lie there, beside their chosen, and sealed by God's wafer! He promised your interment among the royals at the Abbey—but, no; you abide with your lord!”

She shuddered. This was a man of iron, indeed; inflexible, unfeeling, incorruptible.

“Truly, one who loves should not be parted from her worshiper. But you employ magicians; how do I know that my fondness for you is natural? May you not, when we regaled, have given me love-philters in my cup, venenian pastilles in my meat? Suppose your wizard had given me, in the rays of that indescribable star, not illusion, but actual death?”

“I took care of that! He dared not deceive me, though an arch trickster! True, he cheated me to favor the king—but not again! Now he is my bondman, as never he was to even the Satan! Such serpents do not poison man's beloved twice!”

“A poisoner? With whom are you leagued, my lord?” She retreated toward the doorsteps.

“If I could not have awakened you, I should have put myself into the same sleep; but, before that, the false magician should have died gibbeted!”

“Spite of your defense,” said she, leaning against the wall, “this is a direful expression in a lover! What is it to live, like one survivor of an avalanche, with all gone—with all believing one dead? It is a kind of banishment, an exile to the no man's land of the daring sea adventurers.”

"That is where we ought to go now! Have you not said, a score of times, in our sweet and short hours of love, that you wished to dwell in a world of our own, where nothing could part or trouble us, beloved? Well, are we not in such a world now? The door there partitions us off from that cankering outer world! But another can be opened, of which Love is the doorword! We will leave home, England, Europe, at need, to the Newfoundland, even! I will build a new kingdom! Thousands of conquered savages shall be your people! My fortune will make them contented! You will look around you, an empress of the New World, and tell me, in the eve of our life, that it was grandly done!"

"I cannot see that picture on these dark, gray walls!"

"Meanwhile, before embarking, let us pass the time in a Florentine or Neapolitan palace!"

"But, before we leave England——"

"In your own mansion, in Dereham Old House, of which this is the chapel-crypt."

"Dereham! Is this far from London?"

"A short ride on a good palfrey."

"But it is out of the way; I should not be spied upon here?"

"You might be spied upon, but you would not be seen in the everyday jog of things, since, though on the Western road, you should not show yourself up at the windows of my set of rooms."

"On a public road——"

"But you would have no interest in—they no interest in

you—vagrants, strollers, carriers, wayfarers, intent on their own affairs. You have merely to keep your rooms.”

“It seems to me that I shall but change one set of cheerless lodgings for another!”

“You jest, but your smile is ghastly—or that cursed, unearthly light gives a sickly tinge to everything here. Let us be out, since you know all, and the king may have left some idlers, curious, being courtiers!”

“Then, go you, my lord, and see that our path out is unimpeded! Let the way be clear, for I think the night is dark and the sky open!”

“Leave you here—you, that were chafing to flee?”

“An instant to recover, to arrange your cloak around me! After my tedium in that cottage, this is not so deadly lively!”

Her laugh was very false.

“A poor jest again!” he muttered. “But she will laugh merrily when we are upon our imposed voyage!”

He went up the steps misgivingly, looking around, like a wild beast driven out of its refuge by starvation and with continual scare that the hunters were beleaguering.

Catherine’s eyes blazed like a fire from which the fender had been removed. The ring—it was the proffer of a crown! All seemed altered since Ethelwolf told her how inconceivably she had been wooed by King Henry. In this pit of death a sovereign had come to look again upon this Catherine who charmed unqualifiedly. She could not understand how his voice, weighty as the voice of an emperor, had not aroused her. She had not heard that step, had not felt his hand—it was unheard of! Magic, in-

deed! She could not disbelieve, for Ethelwolf had said it, and he could not lie, and there was the ring!

"His seared and scarcely healed heart is filled with love for me! But what a senseless head is his, to believe that the world is blessed with so incomparable a flower not to be set in the cap of the king! Love! He cannot be a lover to believe on any evidence against his idol."

She was interrupted by her husband's voice.

"Catherine comes!" answered she, stately, and not rapidly, mounting the steps.

"All is serene! Come out of this odious cave!"

"Yes, but woe to you if Dereham House prove as odious!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THERE IS NO TREASURE WITHOUT SEEKERS.

Dereham Castle was castellated, for the most part, but, under the Tudors, the added structures were of brick and glittering flintstone, which had a livelier front. Then the windows began to be enlarged, since, when cannon were brought up against the walls, it mattered not whether the openings were loopholes or wide gaps. The clay pieces were molded to various forms, and, besides, they were carved after being baked, an art lost in later times. Here and there over the arches was a cabalistic sign, variously interpreted. It looked like a Greek capital Phi, but might be merely two D's joined back to back, with a handle between them. This, then, was the brand by which the first Dereham, huntsman, or deer-park keeper to the king, marked the deer. At all events, the Derehams were so old that they prided themselves on their name, origin and house mark being lost in antiquity.

The stained, etched and painted glass was fine; the ruby and the azure were inimitable. And there was a yellow tint on some panes which let a tinge as of perpetual sunshine enter the rooms.

All the furnishings were on a scale of splendor which should have dazzled Catherine, and there was that air of happiness and peace in the outlook promising that these nobles had long since ceased to be hawks to their serfs and vultures to the passing folk.

At the very ample casement, Dereham stood, apparently looking out. But, for once, the enchanting scene had no attractions. On the sideboard was a pasty of choice game and a mullet charmingly embedded in parsley and cooked to a turn; but these, as well as the wine and ale so fine as to be "barley-wine," had not tempted him to break his fast.

"No alarm yet," reasoned he. "All is prepared for my flight to Chelmsford, where one can surely find a fisher's bark to sail out of the Blackwater."

He was interrupted in his serious plans by Catherine, who had taken her morning meal in her rooms, coming in with the usual "Heaven save your honor!" in a sweet voice.

She was glorious. None who had seen her on the bier could realize that this was the same being. Her color was rich, her sight incredibly animated, and her step was girlish, with its airiness. She had donned a light-colored robe, and her ermine slippers seemed detached from the oak floor, stained further with beer and soot.

He forgot that he was going to impose his resolve upon her. She was so welcome, with her beauty, which refreshed, though formerly it had raised misgivings.

"Find your place on my heart!" said he, gayly, embracing her. "You seem to have slept soundly in your new home!"

"Yes, a new home! I am like that Roman emperor who never slept twice in the same place, lest the assassins found him."

"Well, we must join to foil the murderers of our peace! I was waiting for you to come to that."

"Then you are unchanged?"

"Changeless in all! I see you have the spirit to brave it out with me! Your eyes are snapping, and your step vigorous!"

"Did you not believe we might be spared leaving the country?"

"I hoped so overnight, but I see still clearly now! We are not safe here, even, among my tried retainers and sure tenants. In 1470, when a Dereham sided with Earl Warwick, this castle held out against Edward, and he was expelled; but the Tudor is not to be held at bay, when he could bring the wall guns from the Tower against me!"

"You cannot imagine me queen of beauty at such a tourney, with my throwing down the warder to denote which of you should be spared and which the winner?"

"There can be no conflict between king and earl—not in the equal arena. Henry comes with odds at his back!"

"Then, we must flee and quit all!"

"I thought this did not overcontent you, alas!"

"What can I descry out of this loophole, over an old, decrepit forest, where the boles are white with age, as bleached skulls in that mausoleum?"

"A loophole—a window ten feet square, and in Dereham House, which has as many doors and windows as there are days in the year!"

"I can see no novelty or distraction in a scene at which I have gazed ten or twelve years! If it were in the heart

of London, now, where one could look out on the thousand passengers, or have a peep into the palace yard!"

"You would spy there no man who admired you more, cherished you more—no woman more alluring! As for those things, is there a palace there with the renown of Dereham? Do you know, my Catherine, that the possessions of this building entitles one to the station of earl? Unique distinction, perhaps, in England! My rooms here are as many, as rich, and as roomy as the whole of Blackfriars! But, being my rooms, you are not altogether safe here—if any stranger of distinction were stopped on the road and asked shelter, here it is, in my rooms, that he would find refuge! Besides, though my household are true and obedient, the pages will chatter, the old women tattle—I am not sure that your presence is not suspected, maybe known!"

"Yes, I have to hide up and stand back when you come home! Up in the attic a maid may wave her neckerchief to Jack, the groom in your train, but I must wait until you arrive here, and have yourself stolen in, unattended, like a draper in his country place, afraid of his creditors!"

"Ah, mine is an inexorable creditor; he will not be long palled off! He only wants one thing, but that is the one thing which is dearer than my life!"

"My lord—my house! But I have but a corner of it!"

"The whole shall be yours—to keep pet rabbits in, if you like—only, when we shall have a new ruler over England! When we can return from foreign parts——"

"In foreign parts they will rebuke me for not having

seen my own country first! What have I seen of England—of its capital? What can I see from here?"

"Well, from the turret, if the sky is clear, you might see St. Paul's spire!"

"St. Paul's spire! Ah, and the Abbey?"

"Westminster, yes!"

"Gardens and palaces?"

"There is Covent Garden, which intercepts the view of the city gates and of the river. London Bridge might be discerned, if you had the magic spectacles which that Fleming keeps for his 'bringing near' of distant objects."

"Could we see a palace—the royal palace?"

"You might see Windsor one way, and Whitehall the other—but not Greenwich; of course, the Tower stands the nearer!"

"The Tower!"

"Unsavory syllables! The Tower, where, usually, King Henry's wives meet their death!"

"Where did his queens dwell before—before they ceased to please him?"

"For one, Ann Bullen, which is in my ken, lived in Blackfriars."

"This Bullen girl was one of the nameless mob, like me?"

"Why, no; connected with the Norfolks of that day; she was of gentle strain—her father was a knight, and was worthy to be made Earl of Wiltshire because of her exaltation. The Rochforts furnished the roofs of gentleness when she was made maid in attendance on old Queen Katharine."

"But she had borne no substantial rank?"

"She won her precedence for her sprightliness and her wit—oh, how few could fillip with the executioner! She called him, as she had heard say, 'a good sort of a headsman,' and she hoped 'her neck, being slender, would not give him much trouble!'"

"She was nameless, titleless, but she died queen?"

"Yes, queen of a day, and Marchioness of Pembroke but a little longer before!"

"Marchioness! Queen! What a pleasure!"

"Pleasures dearly paid for, as all are in due course! But why are you playing my 'remembrancer'—why this course of sad history?"

"My woman told me of her—what a truly regal retinue she had when she went forth! What her state was in going from Greenwich up to London! How she sailed the Thames on a barge bearing the royal arms, with a hundred other superb galleys around it! On them were officials of the royal household, with their ladies and her ladies! Music was played, and the vile hosts along the river edge shouted welcome! When she alighted, a royal mantle was drawn tenderly upon her shoulders——"

"Yes, shoulders which were received, without a head, in the deathman's red cloak for the burial!"

"She was carried, head-high, in a litter lined with white satin, and draped with scarlet, open on all sides, though, that the people might admire the beauty called to reign over them!"

"Yes, she directed the pageantry; she never recked what weight her pride would lay upon the nation!"

"Kennedy told me this."

"Did Kennedy point to her as one of the locusts, with glittering wings but voracious jaws, before whom acres melt and forests waste away?"

Catherine heard nothing but her own words. Her eyes were directed out of the large window, and she saw the Thames at the bridge, the galleys, the people, the court and soldiery.

"Thus magnificently decked and bounteously attended, Ann reached the gateway, over which the royal standard flew, and under which the master awaited her!"

"Yes, and from under that same palace gateway, mark you, she went out never to traverse it more, palled in black, with no jewels, no escort but the priest in black, to proceed to the Tower, where her sable boat shot stealthily under the traitor's gate, and the marshal who waited to lend his hand there for her stepping ashore was Master Derrick, the London executioner!"

"She met her fate—for deceiving——"

"Her husband!"

"Her king——"

"That was the same thing, then! In the jousts at Blackheath, she had openly tossed her glove to a certain knight—she had turned from the bibulous monarch, her husband, singing 'Jolly Red Nose!' to listen, enchanted, to Smeaton warbling an Italian aria!"

"I could tell that you were a courtier by your knowledge of the rising and the setting of the ephemeral stars!"

"It is the atmosphere around the throne—it wilts and

blights, whereas the air of the hearth is one in which the domestic virtues long thrive and bloom!"

Catherine sighed.

"I see; we are to light our fire of home abroad, where vanity and glorification are punished as crimes! You capped my brilliant stories with a sad ending, but I forgive you. My minstrel, you may kiss my hand!"

But, though Dereham took the hand with rapture, he withheld his lips. He had espied the ring given in the charnel house, and forgotten by him.

"Ah, is that serpent still hissing at my heels?" muttered he.

"What is it? Something stayed you!" She looked at her hand, as if it were bare.

"Suppose," he said, gravely, "that I asked a sacrifice of you, since you already grant so much in consenting to go from England?"

"You have merely to name it, and we shall see if our affection suffices to let us do it?"

"That ring! It was given to you by another than your husband! Do you care to keep it?"

"Care? Does it not become my hand—does not the red enhance its whiteness?"

"Dearest, your hand required no ornaments superior to the wedding ring! Give it me, and, if you dote on rubies——"

"A ring from a royal hand, first hand, too, is a rarity to be preserved——"

"Or used! For it is a talisman—with that, one could save a head, even under the headsman's blade!"

"Indeed! I saw but its beauty, not its value! You are jealous!"

"Very deeply! The Derehams are not used to share their lands, their fortunes, or their treasures with—no matter whom! Leave that bauble on the land which we shall quit only to be unannoyed when on the tumultuous sea. Ah, England will be gladly left behind, where I suffered more than I can express, in duty to you, from seeing that you are the object of another's idolatry! Yes, we are well out of the court where I should have scowled on my best friend if your sleeve had brushed the nape of his coat in your accidentally passing."

He threw himself at her feet, with the youthfulness of ardor which grave thoughts had not totally banished.

"I know that this is love's folly, madness and extravagance; you understand and pity me! As long as your hand retains that ring, my heart will be enriched by a fiery band!"

She had her hand on the jewel, as if to withdraw it and let him fling it out of the window to which she turned. In so turning, she caught a sound.

"What is that?"

"What is what?"

"What—like a multitude on the not-to-well-traveled road!"

"Where is a troop of horse?" said he. Then, himself looking out, with caution, like a hunted fugitive, he added: "It is a cavalcade!"

"Gorgeous!"

"Numerous, and armed!" said he, seriously. "It is—

I know not what—a party on the way to the northern forces—they pass the gateway—no! by Heaven! they halt, and they demand admission! Who can this be? Who billets his troop upon Dereham?”

He pressed his forehead with one hand, and pushed Catherine aside from the window with the other.

“They go lightly, to be in such force! This is the fox, quiet and not barking, when he seeks the lamb. Luckily, the shepherd has had warning!”

In watching, he forgot about the ring. Catherine turned the stone within her hand. She stood on tiptoe to peer over his shoulder.

In the midst of the horsemen, some alighting, was commotion. Apparently, they assisted one, clumsy or incapacitated, to dismount.

“Who are they? Who is that chief?” faltered she.

“Henry Tudor!” said Dereham. “It is the first time that the King of England, alighting at Dereham, did not find his dutiful cousin there to hold his stirrup. It is true that never before did a King of England come to Dereham to carry the Lady of Dereham off on his saddle-bow!”

“What do you say?” asked Catherine, who saw and guessed, but dared not believe. “It is the king—there—the flower of English chivalry, and you linger here!”

“Back!” said the earl, in a voice never used to her, and which made her renounce her movement to go to the door. There was no disobeying that order, and no braving that frowning brow.

“Would you resist your lord?” she questioned.

"Like for like!" said he, sullenly. "He would not be the first monarch who was put to death by his earl!"

"Fie! Better anything than murder!" gasped she, stifling.

"No! Better murder before shame on the house of Dereham!"

CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT CAN COUNTERBALANCE LOVE?

There was a pause.

"Come!" said Dereham, in a harsh voice, as he dragged his wife across the room. "You must instantly flee into your room, and make ready for our journey! I pray thee!" For he felt that he had been rough. "Keep there when equipped, until I come in person for you! We must, perchance, descend by the window! Guard my treasure, wife! yourself, from all eyes!"

There was a trumpet blast at the gates and a clash of arms. The watch was saluting the distinguished arrival.

"Do you hear? They will not hesitate to open to the lord of all! The time is gone when the warder would have held out till his own lord bade the gates be opened; the portcullis lifted, and the bridge lowered! He is crossing the courtyard by this time. He is approaching this wing. He comes for—me or you! Oh, that the barons ever left to the king the privilege of entering everywhere, and being at home! Jack in his cot is in his castle, but Jack's lord has not an inviolable home! But you perilously linger!" He pushed her out of the room doorway, and closed all after her, with the fierceness of a miser locking his chest.

"Yes, he comes here!" For he heard the well-known heavy step on the stairs.

He drew the curtains over the inner door, and turned round in an attitude of protection. He was wondering what caused this repetition of visits. It was like the vase coming too often to the well-curb and being shattered against it. Had Fleming revealed all? In that case, a royal captain would come with the order to arrest him! If there were a death decree to be brought, a Dereham should have the lord keeper read it!

In the midst of his quandary, pages opened the door, and, awed by the potentate, Dereham's steward faltered:

"His grace, the king's most excellent majesty!"

As the visitor was thus formally announced, the earl's trepidation calmed. Scarcely would there be evil now—perhaps not suspicion. Henry was more often brutal than cunning. It was a poor kind of hope, but hope is hope, though qualified.

Ethelwolf drew himself proudly up, and bowed courteously to him who surged in like a galleon, puffing a little with having somewhat hurriedly mounted unaccustomed stairs. Dereham House had been built when the ground floor was but a vestibule—the real habitation was on the next floor, which, entered only by its large staircase, could be defended against an army.

"Good cheer, my lord!" cried Henry, so jovially that all dread had to vanish incontinently.

"Your grace within Dereham gates—what honor! Be my greeting as warm as my surprise is great!"

The king smiled broadly, saying, with the genial tone which made him friends when he chose:

"I am led to seek your lordship, since you no longer come to my house!"

"Had there been an order, I should straightway have sped!"

"Orders to my crony? I know all that, but pressing and secret matters have arisen, as a crag suddenly looms out of the mountain mist and shows where the precipice was yawning. There are so many ears in the palace that I determined to utter my words only within trusty walls. Dereham is sure!"

"I can answer for every man bred and born on my estate!"

At this very instant, the tapestry behind him slightly undulated; neither saw the vague movement, but had the younger man done so, he would have believed that Catherine had ventured out to listen, if not to peep.

"Yes, there would be no eavesdroppers where the master, though young, is venerated."

Without bowing to the eulogy, the earl moved a chair forward, and begged Henry to be seated.

"I accept the honor! Oh, the hospitability of Dereham is fabled! To all comers, a horn of ale, and a cut of bread!"

"And neither of the thinnest!" added the young noble, trying to laugh as heartily as his guest, so relieved was he.

Henry was the bucksome guest, as the common people figured him.

"May I learn," said the host, though regretting to damp this pleasantness, "how our grace has borne the sorrow with which my own eyes saw you cruelly distressed?"

"Royal state has regal cares! The king has nothing of his own—*omnia mecum porto*—you are a scholar, you know—'I carry all my own about me!' It is true, the wound is aching here, green and bleeding, but desolated England shows her gashes, open and running, too, and I should think of her before myself."

"What has struck us sorely, lord?"

"The Sinclairs and the Maxwells, and all who bite biscuit instead of champing beef, are thrashing English territory with fifteen thousand claymores, of which we saw some samples in our palace, and those awkward choppers of the mincemeat for Christmas face, called Jedburgh cleavers and Lochaber axes. All the west marches resemble the burning cities of the Holy Writ, and to quench the flames and stay the torch-bearers stand but Dacre and Musgrave, with four or five hundred knights and their followers, with a few men-at-arms! The free-archers have patriotically left the forests and joined the army on condition that their poachery shall be forgiven them! Hang the deer that they have hung up in the shamble-oaks! But all these Robin Hoods do not make an army!"

"Good!" said Dereham, rejoiced that this envoy came on war and not about his love.

"Good?"

"Good! that the wastrels should show this love for the country! Like them, all England will rise! We are all ready to march upon the common foe!"

"We shall not leave England!" murmured Catherine, listening behind the hangings.

"I know that, and it would be my pride again to lead them!" returned the king.

"It is your glorious place!"

"But a war with Scotland—a war of extermination with those tough forayers who are like the bullhides they wrap around them—it will not be a few days' excursion!"

"Children will be born to the fathers in the front, and they who return will see a son as tall as the long bow!" said the earl.

"That is it! During my absence, London, bereft of her ruler, will fall prey to the intrigues of the Emperor Charles and Pope Paul. When the butcher's dog goes away from the tray of meat to fight another dog, the curs plunder the trough! My severity against the stubborn upholders of the worn-out tenets and gaudy ceremonies will bear sour fruit, and I am certain it will be the high churchmen who will foment dissension. I cannot quit London, then!"

Dereham clinched his hands, and set his teeth in vexation.

"Unless I leave my power in true and lusty hands!"

There was a pause, but as the king spoke not, the other named several worthies, concluding with Norfolk's name.

"A man of strike-as-they-come-up! who has so many captured banners in his chapel that his lady would edge her beds with them! I do not wish a light head, but I do not wish heavy hands, either."

"Cranmer would admirably manage all the clerical work!"

"At the bottom of his heart, he wishes that nothing

had been disturbed, provided that he, as now, had the basket of the loaves and the fishes. All he saw in the Reformation was that it would not reform the primacy!"

"If young Sussex were backed by an older head——"

"Sussex, gallant, foppish, poetic! He might be useful in the battle's van, wanting not a spark of courage, if we won battles by bidding a Taillefer strut up and down before the foe, singing war lays! But Sussex would be one of those lawgivers who waste parchment in wordy decrees! We should have swords just an ell long, and so many plumes to a steel casque! No, no, lord of my choice, we need a man with brain and body, young enough not to want to be carried in a litter when he has his migrains and cramp in the knee! My regent must be one who loves me and my race, and England! You must know the one man comprising the wanted qualities!"

He laid his gross hand on the earl's shoulder, which rather hunched up than yielded to the weight.

"I seek without stumbling on the mark!" said Dereham, after considering.

"You are full modest or very blind—with love, is it?"

"What, is it at Dereham that you would fly your falcon?"

"What a time to crack this thin-shell nut!" and Henry laughed boisterously. "You are the man who would, like the Roman rider, leap into the crease! Loved by your people, loved by the court, save by those who hate all that intercept their sunshine! Feared by the small-souled and pilfering, admired by the women, and fostered by the sages, I say, in handing you the staff of rule, as

the grand Alexander said to his generals: 'To the worthiest!' Yes, all will see you take my place without envy! Besides," went on the monarch, using a sweet voice, almost paternal, "I have another post for your enhancement which will hush murmuring in the most invidious mouth."

Dereham waited, in trepidation.

"For this year, I have been considering a greater boon than any under which you manfully carry yourself."

"Is there anything more onerous than to be your lieutenant, viceroy of England?"

"Something more enjoyable, at any rate! Well do I know that your lips, your eyes, your demeanor—nothing has revealed the secret of your loving! But you should be frank with one who has never so unbosomed himself to mortal as Harry to Ethelwolf! My lord, you are in love!"

"If I had thought that written on my sleeve, I should have burned the whole garment!"

"Yes, you love, and you love one dear to me! my sister!"

"Oh, the Princess Margaret," said Dercham, with a relief, which was but a fresh anxiety.

"I have questioned her for you—you are a chest of oak garnished with iron—the lock triply snapped, and the key lost! I questioned my sister, and Madge acknowledged that she loved this man!"

He patted the earl on the back, as a schoolmaster his favorite pupil when he is to go upon the stage and recite the valedictory.

Dereham did not see the hand held out fraternally to him. Something like the wraith of Catherine swept between them.

"For once, affection and policy concord! Thus will you be happy, Ethelwolf, and that will insure my tranquillity! By leaving more than a friend, a veritable brother as my regent, I can march forward so freely and easily! I shall not feel my helmet more than a cap! So let the bolt of war strike me, if it is fated, though the Fleming says that I am to die in my bed! I shall pass away blessing God that He gave a true, fit ruler to my realm, for, alas! they have pronounced the births tainted of the Princesses Mary and Elizabeth illegal! and Prince Edward's health is tottering! Brother," went on he, embracing the stupefied earl with the knightly clasp, "I shall leave with you a warrant for your high office, of which the keeper has the duplicate."

"This is too generous a bounty to me," stammered Dereham, not so much joyously as intractably, "unworthy man that I am!"

"How unworthy?" repeated the other, turning from going away in glad relief.

"Truly so, since I cannot accept any portion of the boons of your majesty!"

Henry fastened his eyes on him, wistfully, as if he saw the man turning to stone in his presence, or falling with madness.

The noble knew how senseless and ungrateful must appear his conduct, but he could not do otherwise.

"I cannot do this thing!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE BREACH THAT LOVE CUTS, WHAT CAN FILL?

For a period, the two men looked studiously at each other. Dereham had everything to conceal, Henry everything to discover—to account for this parting of the two friends.

Then, in a tone of menace to make most hearers dwindle under, the sovereign said:

“I think you will turn and turn again this proposition in your mind!”

“My course is taken,” replied the earl, before the last word was spoken.

“Do you refuse the regency?”

“I am over-thankful for the prodigious honor, honor even to a Dereham, but I cannot accept it.”

“And you refuse the royal alliance, after the royal favor?”

“I know how little I ought to have expected an offer of that degree, but I am just to myself in again saying that I am not worthy of that hand!”

The king walked by him two or three times, then, halting suddenly and staring at him with a kind of wonder deeper than his rising exasperation, he said:

“Do you consider that behind the friend is the monarch? After the request—request, look you!—may come the command!”

Without Catherine at his back, literally, Dereham, for all his self-opinion, might have used a bold and intolerant tone, but, as it was, he spoke mildly.

"Sire, in the name of all that you prize as dear, have leniency upon me. Save me from my own fate! Your desire made me an ingrate—your order would make me——"

He looked around so lordly upon his castle, his domains, his woods, and his tenants' cottages, that Henry understood, though the signification was almost impossible. Still, he doubted such a reversal of allegiance.

"I am wistful to know plumply——"

"Your order would make me a rebel!"

"Ha! not by the sacred wounds!" began the Tudor, closing his fist, as Ethelwolf, in spite of his blunt answer, offered to take his hand tenderly and submissively.

"I supplicate your grace!"

"Back! No supplication unless the rebel is struck down!"

Hot as the other now, Dereham carried his hand, rejected, to his swordhilt.

"Baron of England in mine own house, I say to the chief baron——"

"Ha! 'I spy the wolf!' No more shall you pull the pelt over my eyes! Am I by this one to judge all? Beware, cousin! You have grasped your sword-handle in the presence! And in that presence, it is writ, and ye barons have attested it: 'you are not to wear, handle, or use any weapon, when not guarding his majesty, upon pain of death!' "

Dereham still grasped his sword, and with defiant eyes and steady voice, replied :

“Forbidden swords leave teeth and nails !”

The Tudor receded one step, but instantly took it forward again. He had for a spell believed that this was the leader of a long-dreaded outbreak. After all, this one man, whom he had believed to love him, resisted him, weapon almost drawn. They dreaded him, but they did not love, though he deluged them with favors.

“Chief of my trusted ones, are you—you turned arch-traitor ?”

There was such sorrow in the tone that the earl melted. It was nothing that the king had yet done that deserved this falling off : the woman was to blame ! Ethelwolf, looking with his mind’s eye through the wall, where he believed Catherine to be, moved his lips, became pale, in prayer. What was he to do ?

“Lord Dereham, we have seen fortunes glow more brightly than even yours in the luster offshed from our crown, but we blew on it, not to aggravate the effulgence, but to extinguish it, and that star went into the blankness of nonentity !”

“I am young, but I have seen this thing !” muttered the culprit, but edging in between the other and the inner door.

“You are Earl of Dereham, chief ranger of Greenwich Park, master of the falcons, holding a seat at the council, never more than three places from the chair of state ; if the king visiting you cannot drink the fill of your ancient *Hirlas*, or cup of tenure, he must fill it with new, full-

weight gold pieces, and—suffice it, I can rend and rip all this from you so that you will be naked and poor as the patriarch saint of poverty!”

“You can do such things, under God!”

“I can have you lugged by the cheeks into the house of peers, where your dignities will be struck off you, for you handled your sword in the king’s teeth!”

“I shall not deny that my sword, in a mad spell, might have been the royal tooth-peck!” returned Dereham, surly.

“And when the death doom is spoken, I can point out to you the way dolorous, which was traveled by Dudley, Norris, Thomas Cromwell——”

“Goodly company! I shall travel the road, and mount the martyr’s throne at the end as firmly as my fathers clambered up into a death-lined gap in the castle wall!”

“This is overmuch insolence, lord of mine, and it is to be seen which of us is the more yielding—you or I!” He was proceeding, with his formidable tread to the door, when the earl darted in between, but his hand no longer on his sword. Tudor stopped, astonished that he should be stayed.

“Yes, I stay you!” replied the noble to the look. “For I still am master of Dereham! The castle where your grace abides is ever the mass of stones piled around my rooftree! No judgment of the chamber of my equals has yet impugned me as traitor. So am I still baron of England, your subject while you are in your right, and not fettering mine! As such, it is my right to conduct your highness to my gates, and to offer you my hand to

place you in the stirrup, and my greeting as you ride hence!"

The king's surprise gave way to the strong feeling of obedience to etiquette characterizing the ruler and the ruling classes. He felt less the humiliation of being shown the door, since this was a lineal son of those who constrained a king to bow and consent to the barons of England only a few miles away, at Runnymede—he might almost see it from that window whereby he was bearded.

"You may lead on, my lord," he coldly said, "but we leave here our royal gage"—he flung his glove on the seat where Catherine had last rested—"that this is the last time you will enjoy the honor!"

To the amazed gaze of the hiding woman, breathless, spellbound, the two men left the room with such control that she might—had she seen and heard nothing to the contrary—have believed it was punctilious host and guest passing an ordinary farewell.

CHAPTER XVI.

BITTER TO BEAR, MAY BE SWEET TO REMEMBER.

When the door had closed after the king and his rebellious subject, Catherine came out slowly from her ambush.

“How grand he was!” said she, going to the window, but hiding behind the curtain folds. “That is the king! That is the one who loves me so much that he left the warm, and perfumed, and well-peopled palace to go and see me among the dead in the foul and dark mortuary chapel. He, for whom the princesses of Europe are pining, came and put upon my finger the engagement ring as eagerly as he would put a crown upon my head. Still, Dereham bore himself boldly—but amid even many such perverse gallants, is he not the most brave to head them all? There is a monarch to whom must be a whole island, not to pen him up! And even in England he cannot stride at his ease—he must have the mountains of Scotland over which to hunt the stag! How puny and faded are the earls and dukes, which revolve around him, the sun of all Christendom!”

She looked down; the suite were resuming their stations about the king, permitting Dereham to do the regular honors as if nothing adverse had occurred between them.

Catherine observed, with interest, the bowing of the

bared heads, the smiling, the offered hands, while the royal head was borne high and unbent. A twinge of pain struck through her as Ethelwolf bent his knee and put out his hand to place the unwieldy foot in the large stirrup. She wondered that her noble mate should suffer that degradation.

"Ah, if with that one stroke of the sword he shrank from drawing he had made himself king!" she thought.

The gates were wide open, the bridge down, the spiked grating strongly chained up—but had the chains, the bridge and the loyalty of the servants been less firm—Henry the Eighth might have been crushed at the feet of the master of Dereham.

That hope—if Catherine or her husband entertained it—was lost, for nothing impeded the exit of the king and his *cortège*. The party threw up the dust on the road, so as to half obscure them, and all rode away.

"To the gates of the magic city!" thought she, "where the palace will open to him as to the hero who blows the enchanted horn at the wicket! Oh, king, king! Pursue your course; rise upon the groveling train—the more lowly you trample them, the loftier you will stand on the mass! And she will stand the higher over all heads who is held by your side! Ah, were I not bound to my clog!"

Ethelwolf returned to her, very white, and extremely agitated. The gates were closed against that terrible interrupter, but those gates could be soon battered down; the moat filled with the faithful dead if his henchmen should be rebellious to that pitch. He had no need to call his wife, who stood, but with some apprehension, in the

mid-room. He beckoned her away from the window, where now she could see no more of the cavalcade.

"I want you to listen to me!" He did not notice that she had made no change in her dress for the contemplated journey. He went to a press in the wall, and, letting down a flapboard, drew out writing materials. He sat at this improvised desk.

She looked puzzled at what he was doing. His will? An order which concerned her?

"Where were you all the time our visitor was here?" asked he, without looking up.

"I—I was here."

"Behind the arras? Hem! Then you saw and overheard?"

"Everything!" afraid rather than impudent about telling the truth.

"You know, then, that my estate is confiscated?"

"Yes."

"My olden castle will probably be leveled and the stones pave the way from the sowshed to the farmhouse!"

"Yes."

"My life is leveled at!"

"You all but leveled your sword at the king's life—but the king may relent."

"Who relent? Harry of England?" He bitterly laughed. He put down the pen, and rose. "Do you know for whom I am losing all this?"

"I know that you would not only lose nothing of all this, but gain the double, if you could marry the king's sister."

"Do you know who it is?"

"As well as you!" But her smile denoted that she knew herself better.

"Then the hour has struck, as I expected."

"What does that mean?"

"That there is no escape, but by the means I used to protect you."

"Yes; up to this you have protected me."

"By the magic imp imprisoned in yellow crystal, which I owed to Master Fleming, you were insidiously led into a profound trance!"

"I shall not forget it—to be deprived of command of self—how shameful!"

"It is my turn now. It is for me to join my fathers, as the saying is."

"Must you die to escape the king? Why not flee, since that course was good for us?"

"That course was good while I had some station—some means, some freedom from the immense weight upon him whom all the ban of the kingdom will stigmatize. I could shield you, then—but now I am, as the king said—in your hearing, too—naked as I came into the world!"

"If you appeal to the peers—to the princess!"

"Would you ask her for your husband's life?"

Catherine hung her head—she forefelt that she could not speak in the royal princess' presence, she a mock Howard only! To a Tudor!

"No; I have the feat accomplished before me: I shall seem to die, and so escape too real a death!"

He showed her that he had the case containing the talisman of Fleming's provision.

"That fatal glass! Take it away! It is a demon imprisoned there, but exercising its sway! Away! Break it! Hurl it from the window! Let it take wing!"

"On the contrary, I treasured it. Hear me out, for there is no time to lose! Other kings have had harbingers whose feet made music on the road as they brought gifts to good subjects! This tyrant has fleet-winged messengers who bear messages of death and robbery! My moments are numbered, and yet I have many things to tell."

"Yes, I am your wife, your confidante."

"So much so that I let you assist me in this ghastly but droll burlesque! The masque of death! A phase which Holbein omitted! Death shields a loyal servitor and a true husband from the Tarquin who covets his wife! That scroll!" He pointed to the fresh writing on the desk. "It must be found by my side. It indicates that in my dread of the royal choler I made away with myself. My last prayer is that the king will let my property go to one Catherine Howard, cousin of the Duke of Norfolk——"

"I am your heiress? I, to all this?"

"Do not rejoice too soon. What passes through the lion's claws will be pretty ragged and sucked of juice!"

"But, self-murder! You will be denied the holy rites!"

Ethelwolf laughed long and heartily.

"Under the excommunicated monarch, we laugh at the old formulas. No, an Earl of Dereham is not to be treated like a delinquent turned out of his cottage and slaying

himself—no hedge-stake will be driven through my heart—constant to thee!”

“Can you laugh still?”

“My very skull would grin at this jest on Henry! Wait, though; let us see who laughs last. All depends now upon you!”

“Upon me?”

“Upon you!”

“Nay, for it is you who will send yourself asleep by looking on that hateful ball! It is you who will be able to wake yourself at your will, then.”

“That is true, so far—what is your inference?”

“That before they seize all your treasure, let me have some. I will take a maid or a manservant, and upon the route you traced for your flight——”

“You would flee? No; that was good when I could be your rear guard and follow, and join you in safety. But now, I am a dead man, and I must follow the route of the dead of Dereham. They will find me dead; they will pray over me as dead, and they will carry me beside my sires as the dead. You, alone, will know the secret.”

“I, alone?”

“For when I waken myself, as I hope to Heaven, with whom I trifle against my will, but to make you happy yet! Then I want some trusty hand to open the door of the charnel house to me, as I opened it to you!”

“Ah!”

“Yes, you, and none other, will know what a mockery

it was to pray over the very young and hale man whose taking-off seemed so harsh."

"The door which I am to open——"

"It has two keys——"

"Why, two keys——"

"One belongs to the door, the other to the master of Dereham; when the crypt is closed, the key is placed in the family muniment room, and the fellow is left with the sexton. Now, the one in the castle belongs to the heir——"

"Your heir? Your heiress—I, you mean!"

"No; I mean my heir, which, I being a manifest rebel, is the king!"

"Certainly, the king should inherit that key—but the other, the sexton's——"

"Oh, you will have that, for I think you will use it before the king will use his—to let me out!"

"No!" She shudderingly repelled the instrument. "Keep it in your bosom so as to handle it when you awaken yourself."

"Catherine, in death's presence, truth alone reigns. Should I then see all things clearly, should I not care to awake!"

"What man loved by woman cares not to live?" said she.

"What man doubting woman cares to live?" was his sudden reply.

She started, indignantly, but on following the direction

of his glance, she blushed. He had noticed the royal signet upon her hand.

She had turned the ruby inward, but the broad gold band attracted his head.

"May not the man doubt who sees the woman—his wife—wearing the love token of another?"

"You shall have it—but, in your turn, throw away that devil's token—then, we will try to escape together!"

"Too late!" But he took the ring from her and put it on his own little finger, smiling. "I love you without alloy now! I am wholly happy! Say, for the last time, that you love me, who dies in pretense for you, but would die in reality if needs must."

"I do not know what to say," muttered she.

"Say nothing—use your lips for better purpose!" He kissed her; then placing the open box before him on a little table by his couch, he riveted his eyes to the utter exclusion of her, on the speck in the amber shell, which ever and ever pulsated like something eternal as light.

"Farewell!" said he, she thought; he spoke so low.

She watched, partly fascinated again; the charm overpowered him, though not so speedily as it had her; the light in his eyes faded—his senses seemed to float away.

"No!" cried she, starting up. "I will not connive at this deviltry!" She seized the crystal in its box, and hurried to the window. "Away! But, you"—she returned to the couch—"you come back!"

But Ethelwolf was in the catalepsy. His eyes, open, stared at some point present in his mental sight. His

limbs began to set, though supple; he lost color perceptibly. She was terrified.

“But it must not be death,” said she, “because I came near to wishing that! And that would be a crime! He sleeps—yes, it is just sleep, but—if he wake not of his will, who will awaken him?”

CHAPTER XVII.

LUCKILY THERE WERE TWO KEYS.

When the king returned to London, he had ridden at a great pace. It would seem as if he were riding away from a painful phantom which did not renounce the chase until at Westminster.

He retired, too, into his private rooms, where none but the Princess Margaret, fortified by her own distress, ventured to approach him. She found her brother in his cloudiest mood, with his face shaded by his hands, like the brooding knight of Michael Angelo on the Medicean tomb. She went up to him, knelt down, and as he noticed nothing of the intrusion, laid her fair head on his knee.

She had wept a while in silence, repressing her sobs, when he became conscious that the prohibition for visitors had been evaded or broken through.

"It is Madge!" said he, hoarsely.

"Oh, my lord! Oh, my brother!" moaned she; "let me weep here, for it is not seemly for a royal princess to be seen to have tears of the same brine as mortal woman. You alone may know why I weep. I loved him so dearly, and since so long ago!"

"You must have cheer, Madge!"

"When you were in despair, a while ago, mourning, I think as deeply as I myself now, did I bid you be of cheer? No; for I know that to a man and a king is

denied the solace which a woman may find in weeping. No, I say to you, neither be of cheer nor weep! Bear with patience!"

"Well, you saw how I repressed the grief so that none could say that I, the king, was racked by the common, remediless woe of man!"

"Ah, but that was not your first loss—not your first love!"

She spoke innocently, but he sprang up and went away, standing still a while before he returned to her.

"And you had not carried it two years in your bosom, as a slave guards the diamond which, if he can procure his escape, will make him happy in a far-off land! Moreover, you are a man and a monarch. A woman is pressed very small between politics and ambition. I could dwell only upon love if kept all to myself—unknown to all else. I am one as eager to go down the throne steps as another to mount them. What scorching, scathing wind is this which comes up in the night and strikes down the young and deserving? Have there not been sacrifices enough offered to Moloch, for death to be weary of arm in clutching for more?"

The king resented this allusion to the blood staining his reign. But he did so in his own biased manner.

"Why, Margaret, I swear to you that none of these dooms affect my conscience; no specters dare come and pluck the pillow from under my head! Are they who did not make me draw back the breadth of my sole when in their lusty brawn to make me turn and shrink in their dry bones? Do you reproach me, as none did who had

been sharers in their spoil, for the punishment of Dudley and Empson, who plundered all treasuries, and who were lashed by reason of sentences, their due, in my father's time? Do you blame me for punishing that purse-proud Wolsey, puffed up with a breath from Rome, who was the first to wear golden slippers, as if his feet were too holy to tread England's soil? Prevaricating, debauched, whose robe was dyed cardinal color with blood like the cardinal sins. Why, I would have liberated Fisher, though a state offender, and a traitor of the deepest dye, because he was eloquently pleaded for, but the Pontiff Paul sent him the red hat in his prison to taunt me into sending him the head for it to be fitted on, at Rome. Do you cast up Cromwell's death? who climbed too high so as to be giddy, and whose first step was on his predecessor's head! The tears of orphans and widows threatened to wash away the throne, if not diverted to drown him! Do I war with the weak and harmless, with women? Only for that part, with woman! Did you say, Ann Bullen?"

The princess said not a word.

"Did I send her tempters? Did she not gather them around her as the wild fowler bribes the poor fledglings to flock to his net, with pipings of love? I neither accused her nor tried her, nor yet did I condemn her! The law lords found her guilty—unworthy of the station to which I raised her, and they sent her to the ax and the block!"

Then, looking around slyly, he continued, with a malicious grin:

"They will say that my signature was on the sentence! Let them say—and lie! That time I had the gout in my hand—to write was torture! They had a seal cut with my hand-manual on it, and with this daubed in the ink they stamped the scroll—but that is not my writing!"

This low cunning made her renew her weeping.

"No, no, sister mine," resumed he, rising, and walking energetically about; "there may be spots on my scepter, and spots on my throne, but they come from the lumbering blows of fate, not strokes of Heaven."

"Oh, Henry," said she, still kneeling, "your loss this time is greater than any one's. Perhaps, he, too, was one of the flatterers about your seat, but he loved his lord."

"I believe you; he loved me well—and I know not whom more!" added he, enigmatically to her, and suspiciously.

"Such a supporter gone, the throne topples to one side."

"I scarcely grant that."

"He was the noblest of the noble, the boldest among the brave!"

"Yes, many knew that who did not live to tell it. I think I see him as he leaped in full body-armor, from the three-banked galley, *Grace de Dieu*, and boarded the French galliot, in Honfleur roads! Ah, to souse the crew in the great pickle-pot! Who gainsays he was brave, this Dereham?"

"And yet he, so valuable——"

"Well, he threatened me! No man can live who threatens me!"

"Then," returned Margaret, slowly, as she rose and

modulated her voice to be sweet still, but even, "you must have cornered him! irritated him! You can be exasperating as if you used aqua fortis! You know you are overbearing! You must have driven him to the wall—for he was cited for his forbearance, his courtesy, his loyalty!"

"Who lent you the voice which said these things in my bosom? Into the river I would pitch my crown, my scepter, and my gold, leaving me only my sword, for with that I might recover what was lost—if he had not flouted me!"

"Well-a-day! You threatened him with the loss of all! So he anticipated his warrant! He was not to be the first of the Derehams who should die on the scaffold! He slew himself! He has left you all now! Hark! They come to transfer his useless dross to his master, who is God's steward for the kingdom!"

She dried her eyes, for there was a stir in the palace, solemn, measured, dreary.

It was the peers, who had sent a delegation to attend the Dereham obsequies and who came now in a body to witness that Sussex with the deputation should report to the king the fulfillment of their mission. Sussex himself bore on a black silk cushion the coronet, the ring of the castle keys, and other *insignia* now useless, since there was no longer an Earl of Dereham.

Henry made a sign for the princess to go to her own rooms. She begged to be allowed to stay—to hear his eulogy. It was clear that she had herself in hold; she would be calm so that none would suspect how deeply she

grieved. She waved her hand gratefully to Sussex and those who had said, "God rest you!" to their brother, and closed the door on him, where, alone, the king's ire might not wreak itself.

The young noble knelt to the monarch, while the pages presented the relics of his friend to the king.

"Sire," said he, in that touching voice, for which perhaps the elders had chosen him to be their spokesman, "we were unable to deposit in its proper resting-place the mortal coil of Ethelwolf, Earl of Dereham. This last and noblest of a race always first in our annals as the noblest, is forbidden to rest where his fathers built and defended their possessions. The Bishop of London claims that his See is independent of the primate See, and that, at the earl committed suicide, he shall not receive the final rites of the Reformed Church."

Henry frowned, but there was so much strength to the flame of religious dissensions that he forbore using this new clash for either side.

Sussex went on, hurriedly, because he was warned that this was a moot point.

"So we placed the corpse in the ruins of the Priory, hard by, a sort of no-man's ground, since the monks were sent out during the suppression of the monastic establishments. The place is habitable only to bats and obscene birds, but it had doors, and we locked them. That is the key of his vault, so that, in due time, when this conflict of episcopal jurisdictions is laid, your highness may have the earl placed beside his father and mother!"

Henry looked calm, but there was a hot spot on his

cheek bone boding no good. Truly, he meant ill to Dereham in the body, but he did not wish to pursue the soul.

"I deliver all," concluded the young peer; "your highness is heir to the heirless!"

"Good! Well said!" was the muttered comment.

"I thank you, Earl of Sussex!"

But when all were glad that the young and usually impulsive earl had delivered his message, without remarks which might spoil all, he, being a headstrong youth, would speak again.

"I have but to say," concluded he, "that if his death came from his offending Heaven, I would I could replace him in expiation! And if he offended man with any crime which would have visited him with death like that he inflicted on himself, then, like the ancient, I am ready to say, 'Not he, but I did it!'"

Surely the king had loved Dereham—he did not take up this challenge; he had not liked the speaker, but he excused him for the dead one's sake.

He watched the guards put the keys and other paraphernalia on a sideboard.

"It is an irreparable loss," said he; "to you a brother, a comrade—to me, a friend!"

He spoke with feeling, and all sincerely compassionated, as they bowed.

"I receive these tokens of possession, not as an inheritance, but as a trust. Let the man come who deserves all these our favors, and he shall with equal courage and intelligence, be the heir to Lord Dereham."

He clapped his hands, and they marched out, leaving

him in prayer. But, either his prayers were short or it was a pretense, for almost immediately he sprang up, and said to his sister :

“That is a sadder train than if they had been beaten in battle, and lost their cherished commander ! Well, all things considered, there is still among them those distinguished for courage, wit, gentleness, and old lineage. You might at random set a choice and lose nothing—do so, and I vow, by all that is holy, to add to his ownings the weal of Earl Dereham, and the rank of Prince of England by his alliance with my dear sister.”

She thanked him in a dull voice.

“No,” said she, “the heart which loved Ethelwolf will turn to no other on earth ! It is a dead coal. All I crave of worldly possessions fell to ashes when I learned that he could never enjoy them with me.”

She went out with the gliding step of a specter, yet she cast a lingering glance on the bunch of keys on the dresser.

Instead of remaining in her own suit, however, she called a lady in attendance and the two repaired to the part of the palace where Fleming was lodged.

He had heard of the death of his patron, but his old features were unrecognizable from the deep smile of supernal content, or, rather, full-rooted anticipation, which settled upon them. Princess Margaret did not notice this.

The alchemist, in his bent to enlist on his side all that might influence the king, had been kind to her, “doctoring” her pet dogs, inventing perfumes, telling her women

valuable secrets about renovating dyes in stuffs, preserving furs, and other secrets.

His room and laboratory were in confusion. Leather trunks were almost filled with his odds and ends.

"You are going on a journey?" she queried.

"I have lost in Lord Dereham an excellent patron, but he gave me, as if foreseeing his end——"

"It was premeditated!" said the visitor.

"A handsome reward for what I have served him in. I have the king's leave, too, and I am going to see my own natal place before I return to his side forever."

"Can you do me a favor before you go?"

"I have three days to do your grace anything requested."

"Do you know Dereham?"

"I—I have been there!"

"They tell me that Lord Ethelwolf, having laid violent hands on himself, has forfeited all privileges of his rank and all claims to the Church. That is, though they have dispensed with driving a stake through his poor corpse, he will be thrown into a hole or a corner, and a few clods tossed in upon him, at midnight!"

"The English have some such rites, or lack of rites, handed down from the old times," orated the old student. "The stake was supposed to hold down the body, which, otherwise, after the manner of the vampires of Hungaria, would walk about in the night, and——"

Margaret shuddered.

"You, father, are a superior man. You have no more fear of the Church banning you for snatching away this

poor roll of mortality than of its sad ghost fretting you for a kind act. I beg of you, since you know Dereham, to go there, inter the body with decency, and return for my purse, and my thankfulness!"

"At Dereham?"

"That is to say, Lord Sussex brought a key, not of the ancestral vaults where his glorious fathers await the trump with no more dread than they did that summoning them to battle, but of a ruined Priory——"

"Is it Needington, by chance?"

"Yes."

"Locked up in the vaults there?"

"Yes. The key, alas! is under my brother's ward, in his rooms, but on the sideboard, as I left him!"

"I do not think that the ragged Priory will offer much resistance to me, but yet—I will go say good-by to the king and obtain the key——"

"Under secrecy! for he is incensed against our poor lad!"

"He is incensed for cause, but he does not, luckily, know the cause!"

At another time this enigmatical reply would have perplexed the lady, but she was glad that so far she had succeeded in her errand.

"I am sending all my goods into safe keeping," remarked the magician. "Yet, there are some things which I cannot take away. There," said he, pointing to a bag, "there are feathers worthy to trim a princess' headgear! In there are the pluckings of that rarity accounted unique, even by the sages, feathers of the Phoenix."

"The Phoenix?" repeated she, as if he spoke of a seraph's harp being on the wall.

"Yes, the Phoenix. In my books, there, which I leave to your highness, is a memoir by which you will learn it is a fiction that it is alone—but, read it, for now time rushes me on. I have a great enterprise to enact, which, if fruitful, as I do not doubt, will commemorate my name! Yea," continued he, with flaring eyes, from which she shrank, appalled, "the Fleming will be heard of down the vista of the to-come, like the Seven of Greece!"

The princess, with curiosity, had untied the thongs of the bag, and looked with surprise, but some disappointment, on the down and plumes. At not hearing an outburst of delight, the forecaster directed his eyes upon her with surprise likewise.

The pluckings of the bird of paradise were still lustrous, but all the gorgeous coloration was gone, and the whole was turned into a raven black.

"Well?" inquired she.

"Well, death has done this. I had to kill the bird to obtain its secret, and its treasure. Those feathers were in life as flakes off a rainbow. Yes, death did this." He spoke evenly, though he felt it was an evil omen.

"So much the better, good wizard!" said she, with melancholy satisfaction; "they will trim my mourning clothes, and deck the hearse! But you will get the key, and go?" concluded she.

"I will get the key and use it to redeem that poor body! Ah, but I have the key to redeem the soul which for ages has seen its span decrease from the thousand years of

Methusalem to the miserable four-score-and-ten of those who are accounted long-lived!"

Having thrown off his vexation as his visitress could not her sorrow, the man of mysteries quitted the place with his "Farewell till next meeting!" answered under the breath with "Good riddance!"

But Fleming had no intention to trust himself again within the same stone cubes as King Henry, after seeing how the powerful favorite had curled up in the torrid blast of his enmity. Hiring a steady horse at the Steel and Trumpet, St. Martin's, he rode out to Dereham.

Fear of incurring the royal malevolence, and the Church's, had already desolated the estate. Not wanting a guide, however, the Fleming reached the Priory ruins without impediment. In the basement, laid out on a tombstone flatly set on some broken columns, was placed Lord Dereham. A few old sacks were dragged over his body.

The wise man was a philosopher, but he had no time to moralize, albeit the text was prolific. Besides, on the spot, a new idea had struck him.

Most of his craft, dupes of their caprices, sacrificed themselves, but the Fleming had some of the phlegm of his race.

"I have the egg," mused he, feeling within his doublet the bezoar-stone, "but common sense prescribes that one should experiment on 'the vile body.' If the test succeeds on another man, why, it will require but a journey to any port where the Eastern ships come in, to get me one or two more of these Phoenix eggs or the birds, of which

the shipmen know not the inestimable value. If it fails, I shall have saved my life at the expense of a mere carcass!"

This was uncomplimentary to his ex-protector, but after Dereham's threat to bring him up into a reopening of the Seymour tragedy, he held him in less fervor than terror.

Above all prejudice, he saw in the young man just so much flesh and bone and brawn.

In an age of the body being deemed holy, the few who could treat it thus unfeelingly were above scruples.

From the thought of substituting Dereham for himself, to its execution there should be no delay. He put forth his unexampled vigor and brought in armfuls of the dry boughs and brush. This he heaped about the slab in seven heaps, at each uttering jargon meaning something teeming with unhallowed sense to him. Only once did he pause in his task, when three parts completed. It was to rest himself by going up into his loft to pack in a meal sack such of his instruments as were portable. He brought down with him some useless manuscripts with which he would start the blaze. There was also a phial of phosphorous and a stick of brimstone, which furnished the light to kindle all.

At the seven piles he lit up, each having its prayer in alchemical cant.

Only after the flames had struck deep hold and began to spread and join in a mantle over the earl, did he bethink him that the death had been very happy in time to evade the royal jealousy.

"The *vibrion* in the amber!" exclaimed he, clapping his hand to his forehead. "The mystic *vorticle*!" His feeling was between remorse if he should be correct, and that insensibility of the enthusiast which causes him to lay down his time, health, toil and his immortal soul to an aspiration. "If he be not dead, but sleeping of his gazing on that hypnotic particle? But it is too late!"

Indeed, the garments were singeing, the hair crisping.

"Or, rather, all is well! for the best! The Phoenix egg lies on his breast, and he will renew his life with youth and beauty, and high genius, to await his return among those he quitted too soon! He will be the first to enjoy the thousand years of the Macrobian, folk who lived a millenium! I envy you, my lord!"

Spite of this admirable balm to what he retained of pity and humanity, he could not bear to see more of the cremation. Besides, the heat and smoke drove him away.

But the heat also affected the man in the trance. He sat up, as if pricked in a hundred vital spots, and rolled with a rapid movement, as one in the water turning from the shark's rush. He was dazed, but he was inspired by his nightmare—he was wrestling with death, which had snatched him out of the grip of sleep. In this panic, he grappled the astounded alchemist, and, in a trice, the two rolled on the floor. The old man's head struck a corner of a tomb, and he fell lifeless out of the other's clasp. Dereham, still confused, only aware that he had escaped a dire danger, sprang up, and wildly rushed out of the cracking and smoke-filled ruins. A loud crash sounded at his heels—the walls were falling in.

Bounding into the thicket of his own park, he fled like hunted deer, till he fell, completely exhausted.

Behind him the fire caught the dry-rotted timbers and soon what stood of the Priory became a fire-pit like the Parsees' towers. For thirty miles the flames were seen. But no one came to peer into the furnace. Not only had the place been haunted, cursed by the banished monks, but the odd-colored lights seen at Fleming's observatory at middle-night, and, lastly, the deposit of the repudiated remains of the self-slain lord, made it prohibited ground.

When the place was examined by the daring, they found only the few bones of Fleming, with the "Phoenix egg" centrally on the pile. They were believed to be Lord Dereham's, with whose forfeited spirit the demon of fire must have flown away.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LIVE AND LOVE ME!

To distract himself after the mournful departure from the court and the world of his favorite, which loss threw a gloom over Whitehall, King Henry plunged into the business of the preparations for war on land and sea.

One afternoon, as he was resting his brain, no longer capable of such continuous drafts, he was annoyed by an usher entering, who begged pardon, but said that a peasant maid, showing his own signet, had pestered everybody into letting her have admission. His lord had forbidden that for everybody, yet she had so insisted that he took the daring to venture in with the odd news.

"This is not Mayday, for me to be capped to by Maid Marian!" he said, severely.

"But your signet, sire!"

"Oh, yes—you are justified. She may have found this jewel! I will see the lass!"

He mused, without thinking seriously on this odd presentment of his token, not a common or oft-duplicated gift.

Dereham had such a favor, Cranmer another, and—he had placed the last he wore on the finger of the dead woman in Dereham chapel.

"Where does she hail from?" he asked the usher, who was going out.

"Dereham Manor!"

"Ah, send her in!" said he, quickly. "Some goosegirl whom Dereham—bah! She——"

A woman in peasant dress, with her hood over her head, entered humbly enough to suit the attire.

She stood by the door, which the usher closed.

"What is the child's wish?" asked he, not unpleasantly.

Coming slowly forward, kneeling without disclosing her face, the visitor extended with white hand, which had never done harder work than knitting, a ring—his ring!

"Eh! Who are you to be bearer of that, here?"

As she hesitated to move, he plucked off the hood with the cape, and disclosed—Catherine! He drew himself up on his feet, and held back, as if he saw on her fair face the death-spot.

"Catherine! What does this distortion of nature's laws portend?" he gasped. "Do the dead walk, or can spirits be so palpable?" Mustering up his courage, he thrust out his hand, seized her arm, found it far from cold at the contraction, which he then tightened, and, in a changed voice of relief, as he raised her, said:

"It is flesh and blood—elegant and rich as Cyprus grape juice! But I believed you lying under the monumental stone, wrapped in scented linen, pale, freezing as an alabaster image! How is it you are permitted to quit the mortuary couch? Speak, and quickly, or I shall still fail to believe! Say any words that mortals use, and in a voice too womanly—too human to keep my heart so congealed!"

Convinced by the tone that her steps had led her to

the goal of her desires, she smiled a little, but enough to inflame a statue, answering in a very womanly voice:

“Sire, am I the very first creature taken under the earth but, being in a swoon, waking in the cerements?”

“It has been—but it is called a miracle when happening to a woman beautiful and pure and loveable as you! But it is Catherine! Speak on, and in a livelier strain! Say pleasant things! Keep the roses on your cheeks far above the earth! Keep the light in your eyes down on us men! That blush, that gleam—but for them, I should yet disbelieve. That wiseacre, the Fleming, was not crazed when he babbled of resuscitations! By my faith! I shall love this recreated and recreative woman!”

“I was told that you told me that you loved me!”

“That’s roundabout, but it is the truth! But if you know that, and that I——”

“You came to that dead-house, and into the cold cavern——”

“Into the cave of despair, true! Then, this ring——”

“Was slipped upon a senseless finger. I was told whence it came, and, as I am honest, I brought it back!”

“They may well say luck comes to the slumbering! Then, your slumber was profound?”

“So profound!” and she shuddered and lost her high color.

“You do not remember what happened?”

“Nothing, and what went before is not a past worth harboring, or recalling!” She snapped her fingers scornfully. “I had no life before that death. It began in the

grave. I came forth out of the cheerless into the radiant!"

Henry listened, as in a dream; no peasant ever spoke like this, and with such a voice. He stammered a wish to know about her release.

She showed the key of Dereham chapel. Suddenly, tears came to his eyes. He who had ridden over a battle-field strewn with untold horrors, and never winced, quailed at the thought of what a girl like this must have undergone in the dead-house, threading her way in the gloom, the only living one amid the lifeless, while none without knew that she was there.

"To wait," mused he, "in death's antechamber for the relief to come, and to shudder at the approach of his brother-ghoul, more awful than himself, hunger!"

Catherine shivered at the atrocious image called up.

"Ha, if the king had known that!" cried Henry, pacing the room, and beating the wall with his fist each time he met it, and had to turn; "why, here was I in my palace, lolling on the cushions, trifling with my wine and giving to my dogs the tidbits renounced by a sated palate—and this fair, young, desirable woman was wasting away in the dark! This half of my hope! This whole of my existence! I complained of the warmth—she froze to her granite bed! I shut my eyes to the tender beams of the tapers, while she opened hers, trying to discern one little spark of the blessed sun! I tossed and yearned for sleep—she prayed for a break before that eternal rest!"

At the revived thoughts, she screamed and hid her face in her hands, succumbing on the settle.

At this, he was afraid that she had gone off into another swoon. But he did not call. He opened the window to give her air, and the tender light of an English twilight bathed her in a lovely beam. But he hoped that she was not revived only to be lost again. This time he besought her to live for him, though once before his accents had been so useless.

In smoothing her hands, which were warm, the ring came off in his palm.

When she awoke, she was quick to realize all; that she was in the palace with the monarch beside her!

"I miss, though, the token the king gave me," said she.

"I have it, but it is yours anew to repeat the royal promise? The crown and that one and the wand of power, they shall be yours as they are mine!" said he, speaking as if the trance fell upon him now; "you shall exhaust the wells of luxury and pleasure! Day after day, and night after night, shall be renewed the pageants, shows, balls, minstrelsy, rejoicings, in your honor! There have been good queens, and fair queens, but you shall be hailed as 'the happy queen!'"

She rose and walked the room with a stately step, as if proceeding to the daïs to be crowned. In the yard, music arose; it was the minstrels playing out the evening, for it was thought the king had supped alone—since his last favorite had gone, in Dereham.

Catherine looked into the gardens—where a glowworm or two shone, but all was dark; like a black snake, the moat intersected the grounds.

Henry came up at her back.

"Is that water deep?" said she.

"The ditch? I suppose so! It flows out betimes into the Thames, and that into the sea! So, my love urges on to you ceaselessly."

She thrust her hand out of the window, and let the key drop. The other did not hear the soft splash, but she did.

"What do you do?"

"Cast afar all that might have delayed me making you happy! I will be your queen, Harry!"

She turned, with her countenance so beaming, that he threw his arms around her and cried:

"My queen! Yes, and my love!"

He stood off, and admired her as a worshiper a new idol, replacing the image tarnished, rubbed and dulled by time.

"Await me," said he, reluctantly; "I shall notify the nobles and the bishops! Before the court and the world, England shall see that this time I have chosen the paragon!"

Catherine stood, vibrating like the aspen after the gust has swept by. A fever filled her; she seemed in ether. The past was as if it never had been—the present was something, and the future was everything. She was within the palace, near the throne, and what mattered the rest? She had set her foot on the first step, and she would mount all those that remained.

She laughed defiantly, as well as outrageously, thinking that she could now mock even at the king of specters. Not even fate could replace her in the cottage, the boat-

house, or Dereham Hall or chapel! The night would come when she would dream of more glory on the great bed of state, while—ah, her husband!—he would be cast out to the dogs and the crows on the wayside—repelled by the Church! repelled by the serfs of the new master of his estate! All he gave had been but a stepping-stone, spurned when she reached the next foothold.

CHAPTER XIX.

WOE TO THE LONE, LORN MAN!

Henry kept his word to Catherine. It must be owned that Henry kept his promises, as he did his threats—to the full. *

When he exhibited his new conquest to the viewers at Hampton Court, in a pageant which the historians do not disdain to dwell upon, all granted that his taste had not led him astray.

Enthroned on the gilded barge, or promenading in the gardens which the cardinal had stocked with fruit trees and flower bushes for this girl to gather, or presiding over the banquets, or even leading out in the mask balls, all were wonderstruck that the Howard's spray should be for beauty, intelligence and sovereign port, equal to their duchess.

Sussex, who wrote a Monody on Dereham, and who returned to his suit for the Princess Margaret, but found her mourning impregnable, was traitor enough to sing in praise of Catherine; he said that her reign would be one long holiday.

Her rooms at Dereham had been lordly, but the king had had their apartments at Whitehall fitted up with all the novel fantasies of the Italian designers, beginning to produce the wonders of the century. The paintings were on panels in the walls; their colors were fresh and the

gildings fire-new. The cold work of the Germans and Dutch was overridden by Venetian richness and Spanish depths. The Venetians contributed glass mirrors superseding the metal ones, and glass vessels equaling the Egyptian, and still more varied in hues, sparkled on the buffets.

The walls were hung at the windows and doorways with damask and held down by gold cord and bullion tassels. Rugs were on the floor and cushions made the chairs and seats suitable to one who so loved ease as the aging Tudor.

Queen Catherine, fatigued at last with *fêtes* and galas, was enjoying a "nooning," that is, a *siesta*, wearing her pearl-enriched robe, from which the immense satin train was detached. She had retained her gems with that miserlike feeling of the upstart, afraid of losing an instant's pleasure with them.

In her reclining chair, she seemed posed for her portrait.

The king, sitting astride of a backless chair, like one on a horse, regarded her with unappeased adoration.

Suddenly the sleep became broken; the woman dreamed. In her recent visions one figure had constantly appeared, and she had no power to exercise it.

Hideous news had come about the end to the repudiated body of Ethelwolf. Fire had broken out in the remains of Needington Priory, supposedly raised by wanderers who had not refrained from plundering the dead lord of a few jewels and his clothes, and trying to hide their crime in smoke and cinders. Indeed, nothing but

some calcined bones were left on the blackened stones. The walls had fallen in, too; Fleming had not therefore been able to accomplish his pious errand, and had not troubled to return with the account, only to add to the Princess Margaret's anguish.

His effects had been sent over to the Continent, and no doubt he would join them there; in his village he would take care to forget his brief allegiance to the King of England.

"The wary old fox! He will not return to the collar!" said the courtiers. "Once caught, twice shy!"

Nevertheless, or because of this dreadful end for a brilliant nobleman, Catherine had fancied she saw her husband in the various stages of her "progress," as it was called. In the forest, she thought she saw on Ethelwolf's horse, Ralph, his graceful figure swinging in the saddle and mingling with the chase; in the spectators of her dancing, he seemed to gaze through his vizard; on the river, he, dressed as an Italian boatman, propelled his skiff so as to view her as near as the guards would permit.

It was the specter which disturbed her dreams!

Though without suspicions, the king muttered to himself:

"That old Fleming said that if the soul wakes when the senses sleep, there is a troubled conscience! And that if one speaks in a low voice to a sleeper so restless, one may obtain an answer full of the truth, not always out of a mouth open in wakefulness."

He had no time to make the experiment, for Catherine sprang into life with one bound, crying:

"No, no; let me live!" Then, recognizing the watcher, she fell on her knees to him, to his surprise, crying in the same lamentable voice:

"Send me not to death! Have mercy!"

He forced a laugh, and hastened to comfort her.

"What is it? Did I prate in my sleep?"

"No."

"If I did—dreams are sisters of folly! What could I have said but thanks for your bounty? I am not used to sleeping soundly in these magnificent rooms, hailed by splendid courtiers, envied by peerless dames, and loved by such a man—such a king!"

"Yes, the man wishes to stay, but as you are now awakened of yourself, the king must away—to the council-board."

"Pshaw! Let the council wait your good pleasure! This state is my rival, of which I am painfully jealous! It is a robber of the time my due!"

"Child!"

"I love you too well to allow without grudging any one a minute! There, I see I am a deficient queen, to absorb you when you have the country to care for!"

"I only know that you are the most dangerous witch that ever deluded a monarch. There was a French king who, being mad, had a fond keeper to charm him. By George, you will drive me mad! The lion has become your poodle! You detain me here while my knights are having their iron shells cracked by the mauls of the

Scotch! But what is the glint of steel when your eyes have such sheen? What is the music of lancehead ringing on buckler to the chant with which you beguile me! But to affairs! Farewell! send me away, for I cannot bring myself to go!"

"You may go; but I would go with you!"

"Nay! since the Empress Matilda, what queen has sat at the councils?"

"Make it the precedent! I am sure that a woman will not be more out of place than your jester! I do not like to be alone! I cannot bear to be alone!"

"I will adjourn the council! I will decide to go to the front—at least, as far as York, where we will spend the Christmas merrymakings! We shall not again be long parted!"

On this, she accompanied him to the door and under the hanging exchanged a fond parting embrace. She turned back, dejected and sorrowful.

"Merrymaking, in sooth!" said she, sitting on a sofa, and letting her hands join. "I shall want to borrow the clown's mask and fasten it on with an inextricable knot! Oh, am I to be clogged with this Leviathan at my train like a gay vessel which has captured a whale and must slack its course to tow it along? Love him that I solely dread and abhor? And now a new terror comes! I cannot master my mind in sleep! I shall betray myself—I shall with my own lips condemn myself! I have but to let out one word which is ever fluttering in me like a bird in a cage, and then—out will be the murder, indeed!"

This time she saw none of the sweet elves, fays and

sprites which danced around her in the old barge-house. Instead, she was surrounded by demons, fiends, that wore scarlet and black, like the executioner, and who carried axes instead of prongs and brands.

“At the same time he is not only dead, this first love, and my first husband, but perished—his ashes gone upon the breeze! What a vile passage for a noble of England, who refused the crown at the price of a stab in the dark! I was born too late, it seems—I ought to have lived when the premier earl was March, not Dereham!”

It seemed to her that a breath of wind puffed the tapestry over there. A door did lead, in previous time, to the Princess Margaret’s apartments. She had had it closed, locked, sealed up, she thought.

It might be but a rat.

She laughed, saying, bitterly:

“Surrounded by guards, by courtiers, and the people beyond, I am trembling at a mouse! It is because all around me is false, a sham! This cheering is the same as that hailing Ann Bullen on her way to the Tower; the smiles of the parasites are the same as hailed Jane Seymour an hour before she drank the venomous cup! The protection is that which lets the assassin steal behind the warder and dart his dagger into the sleeper. I will sleep no more until—oh, for one faithful breast to shield me, one true arm to wield the steel in my defence!”

“Will this do, Catherine?”

She looked—a hand held out a dagger to her. She looked more wildly. A pale-faced, slender man was bowing to her.

"Ethelwolf! Horrors!" she gasped, falling back to the farther wall.

He followed her up.

"Ethelwolf, alive?"

"To you only! We, and Fleming, alone, know that the sepulchre has a short pie-crust covering!"

"Avaunt, this dream!"

"Dream! Catherine, you will sleep no more—no more will you dream!"

"A specter!"

"Yes, Dereham is gone up in smoke, or what is left is dust. You have your wish—at least, you are my widow!"

"What demon stole you from your grave?"

"Grave? They denied me a grave! Fleming came to give me one, being a heathen who runs counter to the divines out of contrary. But he found me caught in my own toils. I could not arouse myself after the sleep I had bound me with! He owed me his life—he let me out of those supernatural trammels! But I am a dead man!"

"Ethelwolf, forgive me," whispered she, aghast; "put up your dagger, or slay me, if we cannot find another way out! Let us fulfill the kindly purpose, the wise one, you had at first! Here I am, the Catherine who loved you! Wrap me up in your cloak, take me out by the secret entrance you have used! Let us hide in the woods, on the river, on the sea—beyond the——"

"It cannot be! That way leads through the Princess Margaret's rooms! In passing through, I have engendered her fair fame; in passing out I should endanger her life—her liberty! If through her halls I carried off

the royal spouse, she would be held guilty of abetting me! Margaret would perish in a dungeon! Henry confines his daughters lest they warp the specter from his sickly boy! What think you would be the fate of his sister, who helped his wife to avoid him!"

"I am lost!"

"No, you found your quest—the crown! But it was turned into the tinsel circlet of the Twelfth Night Queen—next day—paper, hollow!"

"I will call, and you, found with dagger drawn on the queen, will wear the spiked headband!"

"Call, and name the assassin! More truly than you are Catherine Howard, I am still Ethelwolf of Dereham!"

"Leave me, then, forever, to meet my fate alone!"

"No, Fleming spoke truly—our fates are conjoined and more intimately than Catherine's and Henry's! We wooed in the same four poor walls; we shall stand on the same small space, which is the scaffold, and we shall sleep in the same tomb, not to be removed!"

"Yes, we are both lost, if the king——"

"The king? He is at the council deciding who is to have my gold and houses and lands!"

"Do you want them replaced? You shall have it so."

"Yes, you have gold and gifts now in plenty; but, after all your aspirations are glutted, have you happiness?"

"I have none—and no freedom! It's as dear to the sovereign as the slave! Rest content, if you sought revenge! I am so unhappy that if you were still human, you would, perforce, pity me!"

"Yes, the dead may still to the last cherish pity—for

they are happier than the living! A queen? She is a messenger of the gods who had her box filled with everything but happiness! You spilt out all else to the couriers!"

"Ingrates, who now play the spy! who wish me ousted that their choice shall displace the king's! No, they would not side with me if I called them! They wish me dead! Oh, that the glass of time could be reverted and that we were again in the cottage, and you were my loving Ethelwolf!"

"I was not your happy Ethelwolf, then! I was care-worn and you gay! You took up the lute, and he took up a harp, and you sang of the fair peasant who——"

She made a gesture that there must be no noise, with twenty ears pricked up in the outer room.

"Without the music, the song-text came about; the Elfrida was a queen!"

"Yes, she is queen," sadly said Catherine.

"She omitted one thing—she forgot to say she was plighted to a 'forest-wight.' And there was a law—at any rate, there is a law, that any spouse of the king, betrothed to another, would thereby merit death!"

"Death!" she paled like wax. "But if the forester hid the deception, he would be an accomplice, and die the death likewise!"

"Tush! What is death to a loving, jealous man, if before him he knows the tease has gone to her doom?"

"Can one be sure of anything now?"

"No! time was when a man went to sleep with the assurance of the woman he loved coming to awaken him,

and he was not left to die of hunger, decay, and a fire breaking out over him. But in those days man loved woman as no woman loves man nowadays!"

"Yes, she loves the same!" she implored.

"Then she, too, will be very ill repaid!"

"I love you, so I should not send you hence!"

"Send me hence! You have lost all power over me! You have passed into another's arms! You have let those lips receive another's kisses! You must die, as I must die!"

There was a trumpet flourish. The king had broken up the council. He would be coming here at once. She stared as if struck a blinding lash. Found together, they would be slain.

"As 'the forester' would not leave the fair Elfrida," continued the intruder, with provoking slowness, and an infernal smile, "the king came and found——"

"If the door were fastened——" But Dereham closed his hand on her arm and she was held as in the stocks. "There is no closed door to royalty!"

They heard steps—then marked those of the unwieldy monarch. The steps stopped at the door. With politeness, for the room was thronged with courtiers, a voice said:

"It is I, my Catherine!"

"Whereupon," proceeded Ethelwolf, raising his tone, "hearing voices——"

"Voices!" ejaculated Henry, in a rage. "Open! This lady is not alone!"

While he looked around for an explanation at hand for

this singularity, Catherine was repulsed by the earl, who said to himself, "Now, Master Harry, it is your turn to have a twinge of that pretty little complaint which, called jealousy, has acuteness to which the gout is a gnat sting!"

Impatient, the king struck the door with his foot. Ethelwolf bounded to it, locked it, barricaded it, and left the room by the other way. In passing the stupefied woman, he had deigned a look; it meant that they might meet again!

If he had left his dagger, she might at that moment of intensity have stabbed herself. She was as one dead when Henry entered.

He had called up halberd and axes; he had seized a mace from a daunted hand and shivered the panels. They came in, as at a siege, he shouting, his face flaming:

"Break up the door! Ha! would you withstand the king?"

The king looked around. At his feet the fainting woman—no one beside her. But a shattered lute; a man's cap—a chair overturned. He questioned her in a voice of which the syllables ran on in confusion.

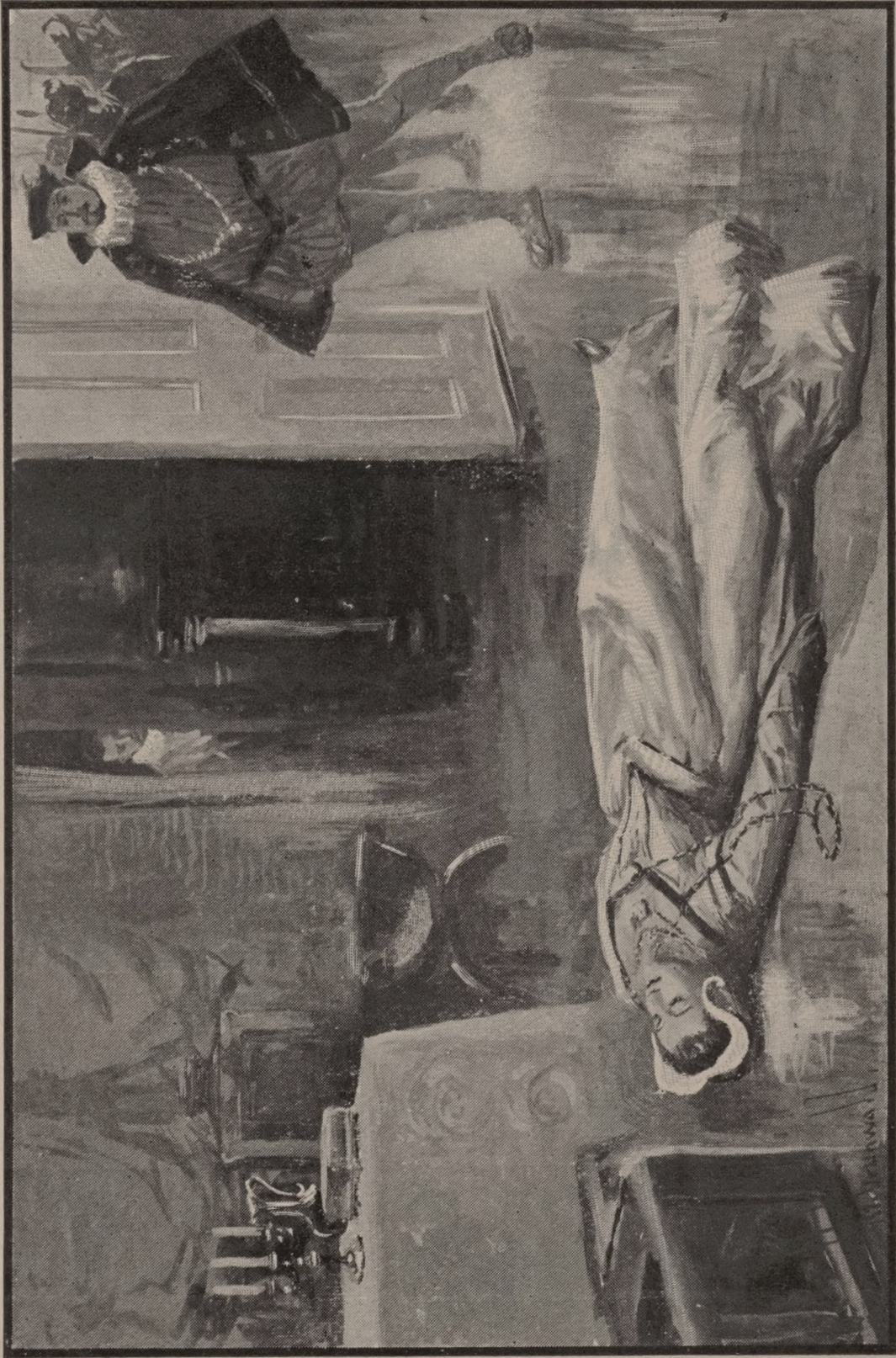
"I am alone," breathed she, rising, unaided.

He had let the guards withdraw in consternation, fearing they would be blamed for they knew not what.

"Does this cap belong to the head of nobody?" demanded he, in a derision not known to her before.

"I do not know it."

"I do! It is the Fleming's!" He let his ardor cool, his eyes dull, and his frame ceased to quiver. It was the astrologer's cap. This abatement lent her hope.



“She was as one dead when Henry entered.”

(See page 258)

"The astrologer's?" she said; then, quickly, she added, "yes, he——"

"Do not say that he was here! His packs went off by the carrier! He is on the sea—he is abroad!"

"He pretended that! He was afraid—yes, afraid that he was involved in your displeasure because Lord Dereham was his immediate patron. He was here!"

"He was here? For what was Fleming here, unknown to me?"

"I wished to consult him—to pierce the future! He has told me so much incredible which none the less came true that I wanted to ask him if I—if I were to be mother of kings!"

Henry drew a long breath. Enraptured, he wished to be deceived.

It was natural. It flattered him, too.

"If this were so, the Fleming would not have fled——" He wandered around the room as a lion from whom a prey had escaped searches for it. He saw a scrap of cloth flap in the secret door to the condemned way—he saw a bright speck glitter in the lock! He looked narrowly. Some one had shut the slide so quickly that it had nipped a piece out of his sleeve! Some one had broken a dagger-point in the lock so as to fix the wards beyond turning.

"Fleming does not wear Utrecht velvet! Fleming does not break a Florentine poniard to fasten doors!" he growled.

He thought he had smoothed his face, but Catherine read all his savagery in his eyes.

"It was Fleming who was here!" she stoutly maintained.

"It was Fleming, eh?" Then his kind master will recall Fleming!"

"Yes, find him!"

"Only, if Fleming be not found, Fleming will not be true! And if Fleming be not found, you, also, will be false! In that case, Catherine, prepare to go before the tribunal which tried Ann Bullen!"

CHAPTER XX.

IN WHICH THE QUEEN'S MAJESTY FINDS A CHAMPION AND
THE KING'S JUSTICE ANOTHER.

Fleming, it is superfluous to state, was not to be found "by all the king's men."

The trial took place in the council-room where Catherine had expressed her wish to set the innovation of assisting without being a regent.

The king himself accused her. He averred that he had heard a man's voice, unrecognizable, in the private apartment; that some one in his hurried flight had left a fragment of cloth in a door, and that a fine dagger had been broken off in a lock. The princess' attendants swore that they had seen no one use the passageway, which, for that matter, had been shut up since the queen came. The princess was not produced in evidence. She was, in spite of her gentleness, believed not to love the new mistress, but she was deemed incapable of conspiring against her.

This insinuation that Margaret had in some way covered the introduction of a stranger to injure the queen, cut Sussex to the quick. He interrupted the proceedings several times, but rather to defend his avowed "princess" than the prisoner.

In sum, the king's own deposition let it be inferred that to contradict his denunciation was to give him the lie.

Queen Catherine had maintained an attitude of quiet,

and her countenance, always beautiful, was almost saintly as she seemed to beg mercy rather than justice.

When called upon for her reply, she spoke with abject submission. She seemed as one foredoomed to be struck with a meteor and knew that to avoid it was impossible. She asserted that it was the Fleming who had visited her, but, having some strong motive to keep his retention in England a secret, had fled like a thief.

As there were old peers who believed in forecasts and who had horoscopes of the Flemings preserved in their deed-boxes like titles, here she struck a sympathetic chord.

"My lords," said the irrepressible Sussex, "this Fleming is like John Neville's dog; his obedience could be counted, for he always ran away when his master called!"

This elicited the one laugh in the sinister proceedings. "The house being sufficiently informed," was about to retire for deliberation when Sussex again intervened.

The king made a sign and the sergeant-at-arms was about to lay his hand on him.

"My lords," began the young noble, giving the partisan so severe a look that he was petrified, "as my conscience forbids me to take part in a consultation of which I see the outcome in advance, a fatal judgment—there will be shame or blame on all of us! I leave in my stall the insignia of my rank"—he doffed his cap of precedence and threw off his fur-trimmed robe, continuing, "leagued to me these four hundred years by my fathers who have sat here! Henceforth, I form no part or portion of this august assembly, and I am here but a man among the many, a knight among brother chevaliers, but being of the

commons of England, I judge the judges and I may quash their unjust sentence!"

All referred to the king, the supreme arbiter, especially at such a desertion.

"Well, my Lord of Sussex," said the king, "we accept your resignation! There is, thank God, no more lack of knights to become worthies than of honorable judges!"

The judges "retired," *hibernically*—that is, they kept their places while all others were compelled to leave the hall. In going out, between the Countess of Rokesby and the Duchess of Norfolk, the queen said that she relied on her prayers touching the judges' hearts. All this was tender and piteous, but a bolder front would have been more deeply impressive.

The debate was not long and no one took the volunteer office of interruption since Sussex had withdrawn. The court was again opened and the queen reappeared, paler than before. This time she stood up to hear the judgment.

Catherine Howard was pronounced guilty of deceit in the marriage vow, and of adultery, and ordered to be conducted from her place of abode, not named, to the yard of the tower of London for her head to be struck off from her body; this to be done within three days."

"Three days to bless my God, and—grieve for my executioners," she said.

The king seemed to avoid being prominent at this close, and he was going to withdraw in some haste as the lord chief justice said:

"The session is over!"

"Hold! Not yet!" interposed Sussex.

Again everybody looked at the king to have him outrule this pestilent meddler.

"Ha! What is this? Do you gainsay this decree?" queried Henry, frowning.

"Not a word, since I foresaw it!"

"Not being a member of the body delivering the decree, you have no grounds for caviling at it!"

"That is true. I am no longer a member of the tribunal, but I am still Lord of Sussex. I laid aside my cap and my mantle, but I still hold my knightly sword and lance. It is to them I appeal, if allowed, against the verdict rendered."

He went over to Catherine and knelt to her. Her ladies looked up, but sobbed; she looked up but smiled on him—the rarity under the Tudor of this knight who served reduced dignity and befriended the distressed.

"Lady and queen, I know that I offer but a young and feeble arm," were his words, "but your position is so desperate, madam, that even this may be receivable!"

"Are you my only hope! hope, when I am condemned?"

"Yes, madam, but you have three days in which to appeal from human decisions to God's. And if you deign to take as champion the man at your feet, he will promise to proclaim your innocence! He will uphold it with his sword as well as with his words—or better!"

He looked over to Archbishop Cranmer, and said, in a clear voice: "Is not this what a Christian knight is bound to do?"

Cranmer could be fair, even when he was curbed by seeking his own ends; he replied in the affirmative.

Catherine hesitated. For if the battle were fatal to this youth?

"It will please the Princess Margaret," whispered he. "She does not wish another bloodstain on this reign!"

Still she hesitated.

"I was the comrade of Ethelwolf," whispered he, still lower.

She had no idea that he knew or rather had divined this secret. Alas, a jealous lover can ferret out anything. On discovering that Dereham did not love the princess, Sussex had sought farther to learn whom he did love. He had guessed very shrewdly.

Catherine rose, as much to hide her sudden confusion as for other reason.

"My lords," she said, in a steady voice, for hope inspirited her just as the mention of Ethelwolf had brought the blood to her brow. "I appeal to the eternal judgment-seat from yours! I claim the ordeal of battle and I choose the Earl of Sussex as my champion!"

Sussex rose to his feet with an eloquent look of thanks. He was sure that he had pleased the princess. He went to the middle of the hall and spoke in a vigorous voice:

"I, Charles, Earl of Sussex, to all present and who may come, I present myself to uphold with lance, sword and dagger, against all Satan may urge to the contrary, that our Queen Catherine has been injuriously dealt with by the House of Lords, forming a court royal, and that

of the crimes of which she is accused, she is in all points free and pure!"

There was a scuffle at the bar, crowded on the opposite of the peers with officials, lawyers and persons merely curious. Out of their midst, to their own high astonishment, issued a penetrating and forcible voice, making the roof thunder back:

"Sussex, you have lied!"

All fell aloof from this daring speaker. A grim and forbidding apparition was standing in their midst, like the champion of Satan whom Sussex had asserted to be the queen's enemy. He was clad in half-armor of blue steel, chased and inlaid with gold or silver, but for the occasion the bright adornment was blacked out. On his head was a close cap of steel, also blackened, with cheek-pieces, and the vizor coming down between the eyes to meet a chin-piece with a point. Nothing but the eyes could be seen, and they were just sparks of brightness—more animal than human.

By those eyes Catherine knew it was the demon who ever would haunt her.

The king peered down on this figure with wonder, if not the awe which chilled others. He could not guess who should champion his cause, but none but a friend could offer to impress the condemnation on the faithless queen.

"I accept the ordeal for the prosecution!" said he.

"There shall be an inclosed camp," continued Henry raised his hand and imposed silence, while staying the

sergeant-at-arms from making the stranger uncover his head for the respect of the house.

"There shall be an inclosed camp," continued Henry, with formal voice, "and the marshals shall see that the combatants are made ready for the encounter. The night is yours, gentlemen," said he to the opponents, "and use it well, for before another, one of you will appear before the judgment-seat! Tricastle," said he, to the governor of the tower, "convey your charge."

"May she see her confessor?"

"She will not confess!" returned the king. "Briefly, I know her—but still I know her well! She may confer with her champion, though."

"Meanwhile, allowed to retain his disguise, the stranger defender of the king held out his hand to the champion of the queen. Sussex hesitated, but obeyed to the usage.

"To-morrow!" said he.

"To-morrow decides!" said the other.

In vain the young lord beat his brains to recall this voice. He said to himself:

"How odd! That grasp was warm and as a friend's! Now, who can be her foe who is my friend?"

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

The rooms of the imprisoned queen at the Tower had been altered in their furnishing against her return. They were hung with black. The light of day was shut out of the small windows in the thick walls. Candles burned as in a mourning chapel, and a praying stand was conspicuous in the midst. The ladies in attendance had taken their last leave, for the news having come that Lord Sussex had been overthrown by the sinister defender of the royal and noble judgment, they knew that all hope was over.

But their mistress clung to it. She received Cranmer with effusion, confident that he would bear respite, if not pardon.

He came in his black satin *chimar*, with black ties to his white lawn sleeves. He had black shoes, and his face was solemn and pitiful.

"My daughter," said he, surprised, "how can such a smile be on your face—how can you be hopeful when I who have last seen the king bring no alleviation of your doom?"

"Do you think that he is softening?"

"God holds a king's heart in His hand! It may melt—but it requires time!"

"That is good!" said she, animated indescribably.

"In what way good, since the hour is fixed for six o'clock?"

"But if the execution does not—cannot take place?" asked she, using the word bluntly.

"What can prevent the culprit meeting the executioner?" were his words, in surprise.

"The executioner might fail to meet the culprit!"

Cranmer shook his head. This woman was cunning as witching; but he could not understand.

"This is the beginning of my confession, so you must not betray," said she, with serious archness, and using a guarded voice. "There can be no execution without the executioner. Did you meet him? Well, he was going out. By this time he would be beyond London wall."

"Strange! to you providential!"

"Humanly conceived—I have paid him with my last gem to make away with himself!"

"Commit self-murder! This is a great woman!"

"No, put himself to a distance, so I have time to write to the king and you shall bear the letter!"

"I? Well, yes—and you may use my tablets."

She was going to write when a bell rang. They both started, as if guilty together. The trumpets blew. Then, that gun was fired to which at least once before King Henry in his palace had listened, because it denoted that his doomed queen was to be divorced by the steel.

Such was the silence that they heard out on the Tower-green under the eaves of St. Katharine without, the voice of the city of London's crier, bellowing without pause or inflection:

"Hear ye, people of the tower bounds and the city, know ye that the king's constable, learning that at the hour of execution the state executioner is missing—and being forced not to delay the execution of the sentence in hand, offers to whosoever will take his place the sum of twenty pounds honest money and pardon for any offence he may lie under danger of less than high treason! Long live the king and the city of London!"

Catherine looked at the prelate with blanched face.

"You hear? I was right. No one will take that post."

"But it is tempting. There are offenders who, to save their limbs——"

"Let me write, then—oh, my head—that interruption has driven me distraught! If you would supply the words——"

"Nay, you know better than I—to mold the king! Hasten to write something—anything——"

She began her last appeal, literally at the foot of the scaffold, for the door, ajar, since not even an archbishop is trusted in a prison, a man in black and red, wearing a black mask with a crape fringe, appeared. An exhalation, as it were, made Catherine drop the pencil and rise.

"Do you see that man, father?" she uttered.

"Are you ready, madam?" asked the stranger, who was no stranger to either, though not announced.

Catherine trembled. It was Ethelwolf's voice, and she had forgot him! She placed herself on the farthest side of the prelate, who, recovering, whispered:

"Can you not prevail over him, too?"

"Over him? As well over his block!" she returned, despairingly.

"This being so, daughter, leave with me the avowal of your faults, and let me save the soul since I cannot the body."

"I cannot speak! I can remember nothing!" faltered she.

"But I remember all, my lord, and I can tell you!" said the intruder.

"You! How can this man know?" demanded the astonished priest.

"As well as my Maker!" said Catherine, bowing her head.

"This is what she might confess if she could confess with truth," said the volunteer deathsman; "this woman was poor and parentless when a man discovered her as a violet under the stones and moss. He appreciated her purity, beauty and worth, and placed her in a precious vase to be admired, to be cherished above all. To be wholly her worshiper, he forsook his friends, his king's favor and the hand of a royal princess! Is this true, Catherine?"

Her sob was ample answer.

"To defend her, he had made her his wife. To defend his wife, he let himself be despoiled of title, riches and home! His life alone remained. This he placed at her beck, and she turned away because a crown and palace were offered her. She could have let him out of his tomb, more a prison than this prison-house, but she tossed away

the key and left to another his release from the cruelest of imaginable deaths. Is this true, Catherine?"

"Still it is true!" said she, kneeling.

"To become a queen, she made herself a widow! You have seen her on the throne, calling her mate husband and beloved! Well, she deceived that king, second husband and beloved! A king can avenge himself with the sword of justice. She was condemned by his judges.

"Then a young and brilliant spirit rose to defend her, and she who should have resigned herself to a just doom, revolted, and let him go into the field to fight her battle! She took his life as she had taken her first lover's happiness and her second lover's honor! Sussex, good, generous and gay, may die from the sword of justice which she was cajoling your lordship with hope to elude!"

"It is all true!" said she.

"So, absolve her, priest, and hasten, for the people are waiting and the arm suspended over her is eager to fall!"

He tore down a fold of black cloth and showed himself at the barred window. By the mask and garb he must have been recognized as far as his office betrayed itself, for there rose the mock cheer with which the mob hails one they fear and yet admire.

The archbishop extended his hands over the bent head and made the sign of utter pardon.

It had set in dark. Torches were lighted as well within as along her way and on the green.

When the procession came forth, a stentorian call was made for hats to be taken off—"To the queen!" and another call was made for prayers. Cranmer accom-

panied her to the foot of the stage. As she knelt at the block, he noticed, so sharp are faculties in these supreme hours that, instead of saying: "Lord, into Thy hands I commend——" she said: "Lord, it is just that I should receive doom at these hands!"

It was then that the ax came down.

The dust was still circling, the blood was still gushing, when the executioner flung aside his mask and cried, in a terrible voice:

"Register of the Tower, your scroll was read "Catherine Howard and her accomplices! Now, carry out your sentence in full upon Catherine Howard's husband before the royal marriage, Ethelwolf of Dereham!"

EPILOGUE.

King Henry married again! He consoled himself with the mature graces and was enlivened by the pious arguments of Lord Latimer's widow, Catherine Parr. As he had said, his marital life was regaled with "Kates." This was one fated to escape what had become to be set as the inevitable doom—she outlived him.

He was in the fifty-sixth year, only, of his age, and had ruled nearly forty years; yet with as much learning in physicians as there were in charlatans, like Fleming, he might have been then but in the prime of a king's life.

Swollen and abhorrent from the marks of sensualism, his deathbed was shunned by all. No courtier, no sycophant whom he had enriched, none of the women still watching for the indefatigable Parr to give a moment in which to be thrown the sultan's handkerchief, no churchmen even to whom he had handed over the spoils from the papal domain in England—none stood by his thorny pillow.

Sure that he could not recover, Seymour, of Hertford, soon to be Lord Protector Duke of Somerset, on whom would devolve the regency for young Prince Edward, sent in haste for Archbishop Cranmer, who owed to his sovereign the success of Wolsey.

When Cranmer came, he walked through the deserted palace at Croydon. In the room where Sir William Walworth, mayor of London, who killed the rioter, Wat Tyler,

may have feasted with the king, whose realm he saved, the monarch was lying like a dead thing.

Only one mourner was by his bed. A monk of some strict order, for he wore a sackcloth and had bare feet, with a shaven head under the cowl, knelt by.

The monk rose at the prelate's entrance.

"It is useless," said he. "He who raised you to pre-eminence will exalt none more! He will appear before the Bench to be arraigned for judging to the death Ann Bullen, and my Catherine!"

"Your Catherine!" echoed the primate, astounded.

The monk threw back his cowl.

"Lord Dereham!"

"Yes, whom the London mob spared for executing the king's decree and punishing my faithless wife! You should not have come on a bootless errand! The king is past your ministration. Absolve me!"

The archbishop extended his hands, and uttered the benediction; it was shared between the sovereign, who never spoke more, and Ethelwolf, who had forgiven all before he asked for forgiveness.

Cranmer perished at the pyre, in the reign of the sanguinary Mary.

At the great defeat of the Scots, under the Protectorate, at Pinkey, when the route of the fugitives was marked for five miles with the dead and wounded, a gray monk was seen to follow this way, relieving the wounded, taking the last words of the dying, unmoved by the still whizzing arrows and the thunder of the field cannon. A Highlander, misunderstanding his intention, speaking no lan-

guage understood by those around him, in his delirium, stabbed this ministering angel while he held out a helmet full of water to him. Thus Dereham died, afar from his crumbled castle and his divided estate.

In the English local guidebook of the last century may be found a paragraph like this :

“NEEDINGTON PRIORY.—Picturesque from being mantled in ivy. At Malhanger House, property of Sir Wm. W——ley, is a private museum to which there is free access. It contains, among Roman and other curiosities found in the neighborhood, a large, oval-shaped animal secretion called a bezoar-stone, formerly, and by the common people, ‘a firestone’ (*lucusanon lucendo*), as it has the property, in popular belief, of quenching fire in its immediate vicinity. It was found in the Needington ruins, on removal of wallstones for building the New-church lychgate, among bones, supposed human, and traces of a great fire, intact. The remains are accredited to the last Earl Dereham, *circa* 1520-’40, a favorite for a brief term of the wayward King Henry VIII., and included in the arraignment of Queen Catherine Howard, for the crimes for which she was beheaded in the Tower. The earl was supposed to have committed suicide to avoid his master’s ill pleasure.”

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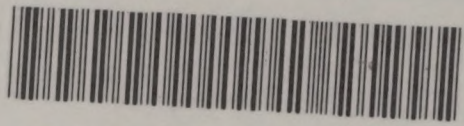
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